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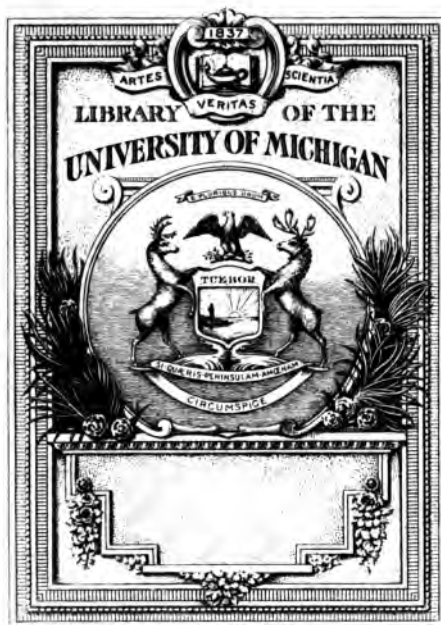
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NEW BRITISH NOVELIST;

COMPRISING

WORKS

BY THE

**MOST POPULAR AND FASHIONABLE WRITERS
OF THE PRESENT DAY.**

IN FIFTY VOLUMES.

VOL. X.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR COLBURN AND BENTLEY,
NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

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Stacks
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RUSSELL;

OR,

THE REIGN OF FASHION.

CHAPTER I.

A FASHIONABLE GENIUS.

It was between seven and eight o'clock, on a fine morning in the beginning of June, eighteen hundred and twenty-five, when a stranger alighted from a hackney-coach, and entered the inner coffee-room of Hatchett's Hotel, commonly called the White Horse Cellar, Piccadilly.

He was an elderly man, dressed in a style differing so remarkably from the London cos-

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B

tume of the present times, that his appearance excited the wide-mouthed wonder of the porters and waiters as he passed them, and put in instant requisition the quizzing-glass of a gentleman of very fashionable exterior, the only individual, at that early hour, in the room. Having thrown his travelling cloak, which was on his arm, upon one of the seats, the stranger silently paced the room two or three times up and down, and then, for several seconds, stood with his eyes fixed on the floor, his arms folded across his breast, in an attitude of deep musing.

The eye-glass of his only observer was again levelled, and a survey from top to toe served only to increase the previously excited curiosity of the gazer !

This unknown was rather above the middle height, and of an athletic form, with a complexion to which long travel in various climates had given such a peculiarly bronzed appearance, that when, as at present, the strongly marked features of his face were in repose, his fine head resembled some noble specimen of the sculptor's art, rather than a living work of nature.

His dress was a contradiction. No Quaker ever wore a plainer suit of broad-cloth, nor

one less free from ornaments: yet, though the cut of coat, waistcoat and smalls, was the true Pennsylvanian, the colour was the anti-quaker one of green—and though only a few thin time-bleached locks of his once black and flowing hair were now remaining, these were actually twisted into what, in the language of by-gone fashions, should be called a *queue*, vulgo, a pig-tail; a metamorphosis of nature to which, it is well known, no quaker ever yielded. Again, his beaver, instead of being broad in brim, and round in shape, was, wanting cockade, exactly the very counterpart of that celebrated little three-cornered military hat, by which Napoleon le Grand distinguished himself from his gaudily-plumed marshals. A black silk handkerchief, tied stiffly and soldier-like round his neck, light speckled hose of silk and worsted, and thick round-toed shoes, fastened by thongs of leather, completed the singular attire of this new arrival!

Now, how could the most talented and experienced decypherer of characters interpret such an enigmatical first appearance as this? Who could pronounce from this glance of his face and dress alone, whether he were a soldier or a quack-doctor—"the first merchant in

the world," or an agent for smugglers ; an ambassador from Bolivar, the liberator, or an emissary from Ferdinand and the Inquisition ?

Eager curiosity was legible in the eyes of Percival Barry, for so he of the quizzing-glass was named.

" If the figure would but open its lips, and utter only a single sentence, it might afford some clue to a guess at least," said Barry to himself, as he ran over in his mind the various foreign and domestic public characters of the day,—for connected with some of these he was quite satisfied this "original" must be.

Percival Barry was a very clever Irishman, who having displayed, when a boy, a remarkable precocity of poetical talents, and a strong passion for the drama, was, in his youth, unfortunately deluded by a coterie of patronizing old dowagers about the castle, and a club of young lads, his fellow collegians at Trinity, into a too willing belief that he was a GENIUS, destined by nature to obtain laurels for Erin, surpassing all that had been won by Anacreon Moore, and rivalling even the glories of Sheridan and Burke.

At the age of one-and-twenty the fatal effects of this flattery became apparent, by his

relinquishment of a moderate, but increasing income for life, (arising from an easy and respectable office under government in Ireland,) for the visionary pursuits of literary fame in London. Percival Barry soon found to his sorrow, that he had parted with substantial good in catching at glory's shadow! A political career, such as Sheridan's or Burke's, or even literary success such as Moore's, are not every-day occurrences; and this sanguine son of Erin was long doomed to share the lot of bitter disappointment with hundreds of his ardent fellow-countrymen—his equals, most of them, in point of natural talents, and many very far his superiors in scholastic attainments. His own pecuniary resources were ebbing fast, and the smiles of his few friends in town were daily growing fainter and fainter, when, oh, sad descent! the spirit that had aspired to the senate and the cabinet, yielded at hunger's call to drudge for daily hire! and Barry enlisted into the humblest ranks among "gentlemen of the press," by becoming supernumerary reporter to a daily newspaper.

It was in this character, however, that, fortunately for the disappointed "genius," he formed accidentally an acquaintance with one of the

most popular actors of the London stage. In one of those jovial moments, when the Roscius of the age was accustomed to throw off the restraints which the refinement of modern times imposes upon the gentleman, it was the supreme good fortune of Barry to have in his pocket that dramatic work, which had been his early glory and his bane. Its existence was previously known, by report, to the great actor ; but now he was in the mood to look at it—and his eye, propitiously for the poet, fell on a scene which took. He read—he was in a humour to be pleased :—

“ He drank and read ; drank and read ; drank and read ; and read and drank again.”

That was a memorable moment for the author ; when the great idol of the town, and sovereign of the stage, pronounced his powerful decree—and swore by Garrick that the said drama (which had been decidedly rejected by London and Dublin managers) should be instantly brought out with every aid that the properties, the treasury, and the talents of his majesty’s servants, of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, could furnish to its support. “ I like your hero,

Barry—he is a bold wine-drinking devil—and will cure the town of its Germanic mania for water-gruel-villains, who cant and whine, and murder in the same moment. I'll do your devil myself; and the dull rascals that have been blind as bats in rejecting such a play as this shall be astonished—aye, astonished, boy, to see what I will make of it;—in spite of all committees it SHALL be acted, and, what's more, by Garrick! it SHALL succeed!”

In vino veritas,—and so it was. The great actor studied the character soberly; played it *con amore*, combining all the enthusiastic zeal of an amateur, with all the cool tact of the most finished professor of the art; and the play, thus got up, proving a most prodigious hit, ran triumphantly through a whole season.

From that auspicious hour of popular success, Percival Barry at once shone out a new constellation of dazzling brilliancy in the London literary hemisphere! His poetry was instantly at a premium with the editors of Monthly Magazines, and annual Keepsakes, Souvenirs, and Forget-me-Nots. His prose in the reviews were among the best paid for, though least learned articles; he was offered his own terms for any piece he would present to Drury Lane;

and the supreme bibliopolists of Paternoster Row, Albemarle, and New Burlington Streets, all courted the honour of paying Percival Barry any sum he might happen to require for immediate use, as part of the thousands they were each sure he might easily make them debtors for, by the exercise of his popular pen.

This was the tide in the affairs of Barry, which, had he taken it at its flood, might indeed have led on to fortune ; but he neglected it, and the rest will be seen.—A *jeu d'esprit* in the New Monthly—a light article of domestic scandal for the Morning Post,—a column of political adulation or vituperation for some of the other papers, cost him very little time, and still less labour. A prologue or epilogue was an effort off-hand, and supplied as soon as demanded ;—nay, once, when a dilatory author had, at the last moment, disappointed a speculative engraver of a story for one of his Annuals, and for which a plate had not only been engraved but worked off, the pen of a ready writer was found in the hand of Barry, and he supplied, from the spontaneous stores of his genius, a tale with scene and circumstances,—made to pattern, in shape and

size, in the space of an hour after it was ordered,—which ranks, to this day, among the most admired stories of all the annuals. That Barry had first-rate talents, none ever doubted; but his total want of industry and application was equally indisputable. In short, he had the genius of an Irishman, and was not without the failings attributed to the warm constitution of his countrymen.

There is an old vulgar jingle well known to the visitors of city feasts, which runs thus—

“ If a *partridge* had but a *woodcock's* thigh,
It would be the best bird that ever did fly.
If a *woodcock* had but a *partridge's* breast,
It would be the best bird that ever was dress'd—”

and we have sometimes thought that if a Hibernian had but a Caledonian's perseverance and industry, in addition to his own native fire and genius, he would be among the finest of God's creatures. But, as Nature is evidently of another opinion; we must be content to take woodcocks and partridges, and Irishmen and Scotchmen, e'en just as she has been pleased to form them.

Among other concomitants of his success at

Drury Lane, Percival Barry had the customary privilege of the Green-Room: and it was in that temple of wit and fashion, (for such it then was, when lords and poets lounged there,) that the author of "The New Play" was introduced, among others, to a rich and silly dandy, then in the zenith of his short-lived notoriety, and encouraged as a dangler in the train of a charming actress, whose beauty was even more bewitching than her brilliant talents. Walter Sands, this golden toy of the green-room, was one of the weakest of mortals; vain of an effeminate face and figure, which he dressed and scented three or four times a day, he suffered himself to be fooled by flatterers, so far as actually to believe that he was idolized by the fair sex, who made him their sport, and respected by men of wit, and men of rank, who ate his venison, drank his Burgundy, and won his gold, without attempting to conceal from any eyes but his own their disgust and contempt for the fool they fleeced.

The good nature of Percival Barry frequently enlisted his ready wit in the service of Sands, at times when the very mouths he was feeding were occupied in uttering the bitterest satires upon the golden calf, whom yet they

meanly worshipped. Sands had just sufficient sense to perceive the usefulness of Barry's shield, and gratitude enough to wish to repay his champion. The origin of Sands was what is denominated by aristocratic pride, low; but bursting upon the fashionable world as a monstrous rich and vastly good-natured creature, he soon became the pet love and dear darling of certain ladies of *demi-ton*, whose parties serve as a sort of convenient ladder between rich low people, and poor high folks, who, by thus mutually ascending and descending from their proper rank, contrive, for certain purposes, to come together. To these parties, Sands, from well meaning to Barry, had introduced the popular author of the hour; and, as the natural and usual effects of exhilarating viands and female blandishments on the constitutional *gaieté de cœur* of a young Irishman were not intercepted by any miracle, Percival Barry soon became an indispensable appendage to certain fashionable hostesses, and a fixture at the tables of their *petits soupers*; thus neglecting his avocations, as "a gentleman of the press," for the more fascinating pursuits of a man of fashion!

Driven in the same cab by Walter Sands to

the doors of the Stultzes and Hobys of the day, the men of broadcloth and leather could not, of course, deny long credit to the poor Barry, without offending the rich Sands; and they therefore compromised with their consciences for enormous overcharges to the latter, by the loss they rationally anticipated they must incur by the former. In this manner Barry's wardrobe was kept replenished; and the rest of his wants were supplied in the same fashionable way, by that useful circulating medium of "promises to pay." How does Barry contrive to carry on the war? was a question often asked: but none could answer. Several bills of each of the most opulent and patronising booksellers had been advanced for his accommodation: but these sort of bills "came like shadows, and so departed;" for they merely represented the acceptor's unsubstantial hopes of profits from future labours of the drawer! Fashionable revels, however, ill accord with the worship of the muses; and our adventurer, failing to complete his engagements, lost, of course, the advantage of further assistance from his publishing friends. These gentlemen were wisely unwilling to occasion the reversal of Peter Pindar's well known saying, and to allow it to come to pass,

that authors should drink champagne from the skulls of booksellers. Still, though Percival Barry not only did nothing literary, but literally did nothing—he contrived to LIVE, and even to move triumphantly, in a certain sphere of the fashionable world. Besides the set, peculiarly Walter Sands's, among whom he made his fashionable *début*, Barry could boast the patronage of three or four families of distinction among the Irish Absentees in London; each of these had presented him to their coteries, and thus helped on his admission, now and then, into the parties even of Exclusives, selected from the highest circles in point of rank, and most fastidious in respect to character! Handsome in person, fascinating in manners, witty, yet good-natured, ever on the watch to please, full of anecdote of the present day, with just sufficient knowledge of dead languages, ancient times, and modern philosophy, to foil the horrid attacks of a pedant or a blue-stocking, when either might be boring a smiling circle, and making young beauties yawn,— Barry, dear darling Barry, who knew every body, and every thing about every body, was wished for at a hundred parties, when he could only be at one.

But, if such be the character and condition of the individual now before us, what brings this man of fashion at so an unseasonable hour to such an unfashionable place?—We shall see anon. He was writing at one of the tables, when the entrance of the singular personage we have described attracted his attention, and, more and more exciting his curiosity, now absorbed his whole mind.

CHAPTER II.

THE LION OF THE DAY.

STILL surveying the traveller with wonder, "Who or what can that queer old fellow possibly be?" repeated Barry to himself. "If he would open the lips of his Friar Bacon face and utter only a word or two, one might guess." The statue at length moved—it pulled a bell,—a waiter appeared—it spoke.

"Bring breakfast."

"Tea or coffee, Sir?"

"Tea,—a loaf of bread,—and what cold meat you have."

"So so," thought Barry, "solids,—some substantial fellow, no doubt,"—and he pretended to go on with his writing, whilst the stranger seated

himself at a table in front of him, and proceeded to open a large black leather pocket-book of no very modern manufacture, from which he took several letters, turned them over, and read to himself their superscriptions.

As the waiter was performing the preliminaries of the breakfast—"Pray, Sir," said the stranger, addressing him, but still looking over his letters, "how far off is Bedford Square?"

"About two miles, Sir."

"The whole of this long street is, I believe, called Piccadilly?"

"Yes, Sir."

"And, Mr. Baring, the great merchant. Do you know his house?"

"Oh, to be sure, Sir,—it's close by, Sir,—only a few doors off:" and out skipped the waiter for the tea-urn.

At that moment Barry's eyes were quickly withdrawn from the stranger's countenance, which they had been eagerly reading, and instantly fixed on the paper he himself was scribbling over, while again he soliloquized.

"Baring—eh,—so—so. I knew he was something substantial—a bullion merchant, perhaps; but what the devil does it signify to me who the queer old fellow is? and yet there is an ori-

ginality about the article: perhaps a mine agent from Mexico, or a grand negociator of some new foreign loan."

At that same instant when Barry was thus puzzling his imagination for a character to suit the stranger, the latter was in vain taxing his recollections of England in his early days, to guess the genus and species of Barry, whose dress and appearance were no less paradoxical to him, than were his to Barry.

The "man of fashion" had been up all night; having adjourned from Lord Flint's ball and supper to Crockford's, whence last he came! He was lolling at full length on the seat, one arm reclined on the table, on which he was writing—where remained an uncorked bottle or two of soda water, out of six he had called for, to counteract the effects of last night's champagne and Roman punch. His listless figure—his ball-room dress of tights and silks, and dog's skin pumps, with bows of ribbon to the toe—his curled and scented crop—his well trained whiskers, and his gold-framed quizzing glass—formed altogether a portrait, not only new to the stranger, but also so unsuited to the time and place, that the old gentleman's astonishment at the modern Exquisite fully equalled

his junior's wonder at such a specimen of the fashion of olden times.

The waiter re-entered bearing the "loud-hissing urn,"—and the stranger, having done the needful towards a decoction of the Chinese weed—taking up a letter, again addressed himself for information to the gentleman of the napkin, whilst Barry listened with increasing curiosity.

"Whitehall, I think, is in the neighbourhood of Charing-cross—is it not?" said the stranger.

"It is, Sir."

"And Lavemere House, Whitehall, is still, I presume, the residence of the Duke of Lavemere."

"O dear, yes, Sir." At the words, Duke of Lavemere, down went the legs of Percival Barry from their horizontal position to their natural perpendicular; and the emotion, excited by the sound of that title, was too strong for concealment; but luckily the eyes of the speaker at the moment were turned towards the window.

"Pray is this early throng of carriages and horses an every-day scene—or is this some festival?"

"The stages, and the hackney coaches, with passengers in and out, always make a bustle

hereabouts; but this *is* a particular day, Sir,—it's the prime day of Epsom races, and Hyde Park Corner will be quite a fair in an hour's time; such crowds of people go there to see the grand set-outs; and this being so very fine a day, and the town so full, it will be a particular grand sight, Sir, for those that like to see great folks. Wellington, I know, will be there, and so will the Duke of Lavemere's family, to my certain knowledge; for I saw a cousin of mine last night, who is Lord Bedford's groom; and he told me it was quite settled, that his lord was to drive the Foundling of Fortune in his phæton."

"Foundling of Fortune," echoed the stranger, "what ridiculous nonsense!"

"Ridiculous nonsense indeed, Sir!" echoed Barry, aloud; all further caution yielding to his natural enthusiasm—but no sooner had the words escaped his lips, than his own feelings and the stranger's looks alike rebuked his rudeness. "I beg pardon, Sir," he said, "but really it always so provokes me when I hear any mention of my friend Mr. Russell coupled with that nick-name given him by the Tom-foolery of the newspapers, that I really forget myself."

“ Your friend Mr. Russell, Sir ! Is Osmond Russell your friend ? ”

The emphasis of this question did not exactly please Barry, for his conscience told him, that though he had been manœuvring for a long time to get an introduction to the immensely rich Russell, he had only spoken a few words to him, for the first time in his life, at the last night's ball. Nothing abashed, however, he quickly replied—

“ I passed a very agreeable hour or two last night in his company, at Lord Flint's.—In fact, I came from there hither. A young friend of mine, who is going Secretary of Legation to the court of Wurtemberg, is to be off at noon to-day, a circumstance which I learnt from him only a few hours since, as we were leaving Lord Flint's, in Arlington-street, together ; he kindly promised to take letters for me, to an old maiden aunt of mine, now on a visit to a German Count. It was necessarily a long letter of business,—so, instead of driving home, a distance of six miles, I turned in here, to make up my despatches, which my servant is now bearing to Cavendish-square, and I am waiting for the return of him and my cab.”

The only part of this speech that was true,

was, that he had been at Lord Flint's—as to the rest—*words!* He had encountered the eldest son of a rich stockbroker at Lord Flint's, paired off with him to Crockford's, and having nailed him to discount his own note for a hundred, had sent his groom into the city for the cash, and was waiting for his return. The secretary of legation, the maiden aunt, and the court of Wurtemberg, were of course poetical inventions of the moment.

The stranger cast a shrewd suspecting glance on the man of fashion during the delivery of his speech; and then, evidently on his guard, said coolly,—

“If you so lately saw this ‘lion of the day,’ as the publicity of his history makes him, he is of course alive and well.”

“You may yourself, Sir, (if you feel any interest in that inquiry,) ascertain the fact, by ocular demonstration, in an hour or two's time—for I can confirm the information of the waiter, that the Lavemere family will be in the cavalcade to-day; and Russell certainly accompanies Lord Belford in his phæton.”

“If I feel any interest?” murmured the stranger, with a pathos that did not escape the scrutiny of Barry, though uttered in a tone too

low for the words to be distinctly heard. Then raising his voice, and assuming an air of indifference—"Interest, Sir, what interest should I have in the matter—beyond the general curiosity excited by the publication of his singular story and his immense wealth, in all the newspapers—I dare say with the greatest exaggeration of the truth, if there be any truth in it at all."

In a public room, personal knowledge or introduction is not deemed very essential to join in discourse ; and even waiters feel themselves privileged to put in a word explanatory ; and here was an instance.

"It's all quite true, Sir, what's in the papers about the Foundling of Fortune ;" said our waiter. "Lord Belford's groom, Sir, as I said before, is a cousin of mine, Sir, and his lord and Mr. Russell are like brothers ; and my cousin says—"

"I beg pardon," interrupted Barry, motioning with his hand to the stranger and the waiter at the same time ; and then immediately addressing the former :—"excuse the liberty—but I presume, Sir, you are a stranger in town ; the accounts in the papers are founded in truth certainly,—but, happening to have the honour of

Lord Belford's particular acquaintance, I shall be happy to afford you every information respecting him whom you so properly denominate 'The Lion of the Day,' from higher authorities than the cousin of Lord Belford's groom !"

The stranger merely bowed—but it was a bow of tacit acquiescence ; and it was quite sufficient for such a Mercury, that his services were not forbidden.

"You allude to the newspapers, Sir," said Barry. "In the first place, allow me to ask—what papers have you seen within these few days?"

"I have been only about forty hours in England," said the stranger ; "I have travelled, in fact, from Constantinople, by the route of Vienna and Paris, and with such expedition as permitted no sojourn at either of the latter places. Waiting at Calais for the packet, I read, for the first time during many months, some English newspapers, and in one of them a long story about the Rich Foundling ; in which the guardian, Mr. Gregory, is so besprinkled with praise, that I conclude the editor must be deeply in the methodist interests."

"Ha !—ha !—ha !" laughed Barry — "you allude to the 'Morning Herald,' a most impar-

tial print,—open to all parties, and, in truth, Sir, so are all our newspapers—that is, mind you, on the same terms that our courts of law and coffee-houses are, namely, by paying the costs. I recollect the article you allude to. Waiter, bring me the file of *Heralds*.”

The file was brought, and in a few minutes Barry exclaimed—“By my honour, now, this is, after all, a conscientious Editor. Observe, Sir, if you please, these words between brackets,—‘From a correspondent.’ Now that implies (and all persons acquainted with the arcana of the public press perfectly comprehend the sign)—that implies, Sir, that what follows is inserted at the price of so much per line, duty to the stamp-office included: and is as well understood to be a puff paid for, as if the word advertisement, which is sometimes the case, were actually prefixed to it. But let us read—and then for a few commentaries.—

“ ‘ [From a Correspondent.]

“ ‘ One of the largest transfers of stock perhaps ever made by one private individual to another, was executed at the Bank on Thursday last—when the sum of seven hundred and eighty-seven thousand, four hundred and thirteen pounds, nine shillings and five pence, new four

was placed to the account of Osmond Russell, Esq., from that of his late sole trustee and guardian, James Gregory, Esq., of the firm of Gregory, M'Gregor, and Co. The latter highly respectable individual, so well known in the commercial and monied world, is, however, still better and more extensively known as the faithful treasurer, and active supporter of numerous pious and charitable institutions in the Evangelical interest, and the zealous coadjutor for many years, both in and out of parliament, of the eloquent and triumphant advocate of the abolition of negro slavery. The extraordinary manner in which, from the hour of his mysterious birth, Mr. Russell was adopted by old Van Voorst, the miser, is now pretty generally known. Immense as was the wealth bequeathed to this Foundling of Fortune, as he is commonly called, the great abilities and experience of Mr. Gregory in the management of money transactions, combined with that gentleman's peculiar opportunities of making the best investments, afforded by his constant intercourse with all parts of the globe, have, we are given to understand, enabled that great and good man to more than double its amount during the long period of his trusteeship; and that, in consequence, Mr. Russell is

at the moment of his coming of age, one of the richest commoners in England, as the landed estates purchased for him by his guardian are nearly double the amount of his funded property. But what is of infinitely greater importance than the increase of his worldly wealth, there is every reason to believe, that the unceasing care and anxiety of his worthy guardian, with respect to the religious education of his ward, strengthened by example of the pious circle in which he moves, have been blessed with such success, that Mr. Russell, like his guardian, is not only a good man, according to the Royal Exchange scale of good men, but in the most important sense of that word. We are credibly informed, that he has already scrupulously set apart a considerable portion of his immense wealth, for the furtherance and support of all those evangelical institutions and pious plans, raised or supported by the Gregory interest, with the extensive usefulness of which he must be thoroughly acquainted, from his long connection with that indefatigable, zealous, and faithful steward and almoner to the religious world, as Mr. Gregory may be truly called.' "

"God forbid!" exclaimed the traveller, with an energy that confirmed the acute Barry in his

surmises, that he must in some way or other be connected with the "Lion of the day." Concealing his suspicions, however, under an air of inattention to the stranger's emotion, "Amen, amen!" said Barry; "and fortunately for Mr. Russell himself, as well as for that large portion of his fellow-creatures, among whom the influence of his great fortune must operate much good or ill, God has forbade it. I will vouch for it that he is no Methodist, and that a very small portion indeed of his wealth is likely to be wasted on the hypocritical schemes of those Protestant Jesuits, of whom Gregory may be considered the 'general.'"

The stranger looked his eager desire to hear more, but was too much on his guard to utter it, and he went on fishing. "It surprises me," said he, "how these newspaper folks obtain such general information, not only of public affairs but of the secrets of private families."

"Your surprise would cease, my good Sir," said Barry, who was a perfect adept in the most mysterious arcana of the press, "your surprise would cease," repeated he, "if, like me, you knew that nine times out of ten the communication of the most delicious bits of scandal, as well as the broadest puffs, come, as in the present

instance, from the parties alluded to themselves, with golden reasons for their insertion. Here now," continued he, "is an article on the same subject, of an opposite complexion to that which was doubtless paid for by Gregory himself."

Barry then produced another newspaper, folded to the size of a letter, but even then rather too bulky for the small pocket of his almost skirtless coat. "You will possibly suppose," he said, "that what, with your permission, I am about to read to you, comes from Lord Belford's own hand. I allow that his lordship certainly does write, but I happen to know who did write this article, and I can assure you his lordship did *not*; no, nor I—'pon honour, though your smile seems to hint as much. This is a *Morning Chronicle*, ten days old. I last evening expected an opportunity of giving the very young nobleman, who wrote it, a hint or two for his instruction, but he disappointed me, and did not appear; he could not get away from duty at Windsor. Now mark:—

" 'We are enabled to contradict, from undoubted authority, the reports that Mr. Russell, the Foundling of Fortune, as he is called, has been induced by his saintly guardian to purchase, at an enormous price, the estate of Black-

more Hall and Park, Shropshire, with all its dependencies ; consisting, among other property, of three or four Methodist chapels, a missionary college, a score of schools, a printing-office for religious tracts, and a whole plantation of pious peasants as settlers. It is true, that the evangelical baronet, at present the nominal proprietor of this fine estate, has recently had a hint from a certain quarter, that a late large transfer of ready money stock renders it desirable that the mortgagee should touch or foreclose, and the baronet is now beginning to rub the dust from his eyes, and look about after the temporals, having found his spiritual projects require more substantial means of support than the prayers and praises of his lazy followers, who have supplanted a race of honest and industrious tenants ! But we take this opportunity of cautioning the public against the cunning devices of the Saint Gregory party, whose policy induces the whole set to keep their own names, in connection with this wealthy commoner, perpetually before the public ; when the fact is, that Mr. Russell is more of a liberal than an evangelical, and has totally shaken off the trammels which the will of old Van Voorst imposed upon him till his twenty-first year. This fortunate young gentle-

man henceforth enjoys his great wealth, completely free from all conditions. There is certainly nothing to prevent him from disposing of his whole property, if he so pleases, in the erection of Wesleyan chapels, or Whitfieldite tabernacles; in bribing jolly Jack tars to turn psalm-singing Bethel-unionists; or in sending idle and discontented shoemakers to sow seeds of rebellion in the British colonies, and, under pretence of converting the negroes, excite them to revolt. All this mischief he may do, if he pleases; and all this the Evangelicals have tempted him to do. But we hope better things from the friend of that liberal and patriotic young nobleman, Lord Belford; and the associate of such men as form the literary and political circle of that distinguished member of the Lavemere family. In fact, by openly enlisting himself among the Whigs on the liberal and patriotic side in parliament, he——”

“What! has he then avowed himself a party man?” interrupted the Unknown, thrown off his guard by something of anger as well as surprise.

“If all Chronicles are necessarily infallible, you perceive, ‘Yes;’ but I, whom opportunity has enlightened a little on these matters, venture to say, ‘No.’ The noble, but pennyless, writer

of this article wished and wishes this wealthy commoner to be a Whig professed, and therefore so sets it down; but, believe me, Sir, Russell will never carry a bell round his neck, nor ever be driven in parliamentary harness—no, not even in a team of Whigs, with Charles James Fox himself alive again, for their *leader*.”

“Do you say this of your own knowledge, Sir?” quickly asked the stranger, with more of an unbending smile of satisfaction than he had yet bestowed on Barry’s volunteer information; but ere the ready lie of affirmation which hovered on the respondent’s lips had left them, he continued, “To be plain with you, Sir, I am no very credulous believer of the *marvellous*, and you must forgive the scepticism that makes me stumble at a *miracle*. And to me it seems little less than miraculous, that, having travelled some thousands of miles, with letters of introduction to Mr. Gregory and his ward, Mr. Russell, I should happen, on the very first moment of my arrival in London, in such an unlikely situation, and at such an unusual hour as this, to meet the very individual exclusively capable, as you appear to be, of affording me so much desirable information respecting those persons, to whom

I confess I shall present myself a perfect stranger."

"Pardon me, I really see no miracle in all this," said Barry, with one of his insinuating smiles. "A traveller arrives by a public coach, and is ushered into a public room. The hour is early, but accident has brought another of the public there; a public topic happens to elicit an explanatory observation from the one gentleman to the other, and a few sentences serve to shew that the younger, who has been an actor and an observer of *Life in London*, for the last ten years, knows more of public characters and the popular topics of the day than his senior, who has been an absentee, probably, these——"

The old gentleman was not to be trapped, but coolly said, "Read on, Sir, if you please."

Barry bit his lips, twirled the ribband of his eye-glass round his finger, levelled it once more at the *Morning Chronicle*, and proceeded, "'In fact, by openly enlisting himself among the Whigs, on the liberal and patriotic side in parliament, in despite of the remonstrances and lamentations of Saint Gregory and all the saints, he has given proofs of a superior mind, and afforded the best possible pledge that, both as a public

character and a private gentleman, he intends to spend his princely fortune in a manner that will at once reflect honour on himself, strengthen the cause of liberalism, and generally promote the best interests of his country and of mankind. One characteristic anecdote, the truth of which we can vouch for, speaks volumes for his independence: It was bribingly insinuated in a certain quarter that a baronetcy, or even a peerage, for one so immensely rich, was not impossible. ‘Not *impossible* to be *offered*, perhaps; but *quite impossible* to be *accepted*,’ was Mr. Russell’s instantaneous reply.’”

“And now, pray, Sir, how much of this history, or prophecy, am I to believe orthodox, and how much apocryphal? what part is true, what false?” said the stranger. “Yet, stay,” continued he, “you may be surprised, but you must know, Sir, I have in my pocket another of these entertaining epitomes and brief chronicles of the times, containing a still different view of this subject. From these three versions of the same story, assisted by your talents, as commentator, it is possible I may be able to form some opinion of my own.”

Thus saying, the old gentleman dived to the bottom of a pocket, large enough, of itself, to

furnish materials for a whole coat, such as Barry wore, and drew up a *John Bull*.

"Will you do me the favour to read it. I shall understand it better from your *emphasis*. I was so much struck with the spirit of it, on running my eye over it, at Dover, that I prevailed with the landlord of the inn to spare it to me, on the chance of being able to procure another."

After clearing his voice with a loud "*hem*," and his eye-glass with a scented-handkerchief, of French cambric, Barry once more applied the latter to his organ of vision, and read thus:—

" 'MR. RUSSELL.

" 'A vast deal of humbug respecting this gentleman having been lately imposed upon the credulity of the public, we have been at some pains to sift the truth from the fiction, and we now present the readers of *Bull* with the only authentic facts that have hitherto transpired. Nearly two-and-twenty years ago, an English lady was landed at the Cape of Good Hope from a vessel which immediately sailed and left her there under the protection of old Peter Van Voorst, the celebrated miser. Soon after her disem-

barkation, the lady gave birth to a male child, and died. Who this unfortunate mother was, or from what part of the world she came, if even known to Van Voorst, was never divulged. The motives which influenced old Peter (who amassed his wealth, as it is well known, in England, but was then settled at the Cape), to adopt the infant for his heir, are variously stated. Some persons believe that the lady revealed a story, under pledge of secrecy, so interesting, that it created pity even in a miser's heart. Others impute the adoption to a mere sudden whim ; but that the old man did adopt him as his sole heir, and consign him to the guardianship of the rich Methodist, Gregory, and that his present property exceeds three millions, constitute, we have reason to believe, all the facts known concerning this ' Foundling of Fortune,' as one of our cotemporaries in rivalry with the Minerva Press has thought proper to nickname Mr. Russell. The trumpery inventions of the same scribes of the circulating library class, have also most sentimentally described scenes which never occurred—have drawn for their foundling a variety of characters after their own sickly imagination, and provided him with ancestors of their own creation. Now, all

these Tom-fooleries are so many base impositions upon the gullibility of the public, and so many acts of injustice and illiberality to the individual. For our own parts, we do not profess to know any thing whatever of Mr. Russell beyond what we have stated, except, indeed, that the report of his being likely to become a tool of the saints, is a false and abominable libel upon his understanding, put forth and propagated by the saints themselves, from whose missionary money-traps and other pick-pocket manœuvres we are heartily glad he has had the sense and firmness to extricate both his mind and his estate. We should be sorry, however, to find that he has only avoided Charybdis to be wrecked on Scylla, and, therefore, caution him against the evident designs of certain aristocratic Whigs, who are as anxious to see his wealth squandered, like a true and staunch whiglin, in throwing obstacles in the way of the ministers and the welfare of the state, as his former evangelical friends, Gregory and Co., were and are to see the influence of three millions opposing or undermining the church. We can assure Mr. Russell we are not ignorant, though he may be, of the well-planned schemes which were laid to obtain so rich a recruit for the opposition

benches ; but we hope that the same sound common sense which has delivered him, so much to his honour, from the snares of one species of humbug—the mock-pious, will speedily open his eyes to the twin humbug—the mock-patriotic.

“ We repeat we know nothing whatever of this gentleman personally, but he has become, and will necessarily become still more so, from the influence which his great wealth gives him, a public character, and as such only we speak of, or to him. We have only five words more to say to him, and we have done. Knowing as we do pretty well the sharp look out by all the liberal tribe for a share of the golden fleece, that Doctor Brickbat, and the Mechanic Institution folks have their eyes on him ; as well as the Schoolmaster abroad, and all the mob-education people ; aware likewise how agreeable a few thousands would be to the projectors of Stinkomalee, and how happy Mr. Secretary to the Society for the *Diffusion* of Useful Knowledge, by the means of a *monopoly* of books, would be to enrol Mr. Russell among his life subscribers, for a few thousands more, we think it our public duty, honestly and openly to admonish him to be on his guard against these flat-traps, one and all. The humbug

of the Liberals is, indeed, in one particular, of a different complexion to that of the Saints : there is certainly no mock-piety here. But is the church of England already annihilated ? Is there indeed to be no choice for the rising generation, between Evangelism, on the one hand, and Atheism, under the new name of Liberalism, on the other ? It is in truth a crisis of danger, and turning our view from the wealthy hypocrites, whose snares he has escaped, to the pennyless and hungry liberals to whom he has fled, our last five words to Mr. Russell, shall be—‘ take care of your pocket.’ ”

The novel yet pertinent commentaries of Barry on this unusually long article, induced the stranger to believe that, if not by miracle, at least he had by most lucky accident, met with that very “ Guide and Key to London ” which, after an absence from England of many years, was at this moment his chief desideratum. And he was correct ; for there was not a mysterious inuendo in any of the public journals but Barry could unravel it. He could either elaborate a hint into a history, or compress a history into an anecdote ; could inform you off-hand who was F. H., L. E. L., or any other literary cipher ; had discovered a key to the hieroglyphic of the

little hand ; could translate a single Greek letter into an English surname, and accurately supply plain letters from the Roman alphabet for all those puzzling asterisks which so constantly perplex and tantalize less erudite professors in the modern School for Scandal. The penetration of so experienced an observer of mankind as was the traveller, soon discovered that Barry possessed a species of knowledge, which would be most serviceable to him in the pursuit of those objects, which at this time engrossed every faculty of his mind : whilst Barry, on his part, putting together the inquiries after Mr. Baring, the letters to Gregory, and above all to the Foundling of Fortune himself, with certain expressive ejaculations on the character of Lord Belford, at once concluded that the stranger must be some potent and wealthy personage from foreign parts, connected with the mysteries of the Foundling ; and immediately perceiving the immense advantages of the “ gleanings ” to be picked up from such an acquaintance, resolved to exert his utmost abilities to turn the “ God-send ” to a good account.

But though thus resolved “ to do the amiable ” to the stranger, he himself by no means intended to unfold to him his real character ; and at the

same time, though the stranger resolved to pump his new acquaintance, nothing could be more opposite to his resolution or designs than a disclosure of his own character and pursuits to Barry.

Thus whilst mutual curiosity and similar designs upon each other, drew these wary ones every moment nearer and nearer to a sort of tacit compact to question and answer one another, still each remembered that he was not sworn to speak "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" in his communication to the other. Thus they *parleyed* for some time; and thus a progress was made in forming a shy, experimental sort of temporary acquaintance, sufficient to induce the traveller to accept the politely proffered services of Barry to accompany him to Hyde Park Corner, and point out the public characters, including Mr. Russell and the Lavemere family, who were expected to exhibit in the grand cavalcade for Epsom.

In the mean time, Barry had refreshed with coffee, and one or two additional travellers dropping in, he betrayed every now and then, by a glance at the dial, his impatience for the return of his cab and his groom, and his anger at the delay was becoming almost audible, when

the former drove up to the door, and the latter, hat and letter in hand, entered the room.

The seal was snapped—the sheet of post unfolded—when the gladdened eyes of Barry beheld enclosed a slip of thin, transparent paper, worth one hundred pounds. This he slid quickly into his waistcoat pocket, and then (to himself) read thus:—

“ MY DEAR FELLOW,

“ I have complied with your desire, and send you the inclosed for your bill, *meo periculo*. In return, do me the favour, as you happen to be so near, to drive to Crockford’s, and, if possible, shake Tom out of a lethargy, in which Harris tells me he left him about an hour ago. Tell him, that I must and will go to Epsom, and shall be off immediately, for dear Harriet has set her heart upon it. Old Stubbs is, as he knows, in a cursed bad temper already; and though there will be little doing to-day at the house, if my father should take it into his wise old noddle to come to the office, there will be the very devil to pay. Do, my dear fellow, exert your influence with Tom; you can do more with him than any one else. He is not acting a brother’s part by me, and is, I think, resolved to ruin us

all. Do make him shew himself here to-day, if it be but for an hour. But whether he does or not, off I am ; for my darling Harriett expects me, with the dennet, at ten, in Howland-street ; and besides, I would not miss the race for five thousand pounds ; in truth, *entre nous*, my stake amounts to more. I believe you do nothing at Tattersall's. Try your best, my dear fellow, with Tom. I suspect that exquisite dandy, the Colonel, who is all in all, at present, with the poor fellow, is in league with the Prince of Hell-ites. At all events, he is absolutely murdering Tom with opium. Shall you be in the city to-morrow, or when shall I see you ? Try and look in at Garraway's, about one ; and if I am not there, send for me.

“ Your's,

“ HENRY HOLLOWAY.”

Folding up this specimen of city correspondence, and turning to the stranger, thus said Barry,

“ My friend, the Secretary of Legation, here requests me to call and leave a message of some importance at the Foreign Office. You must excuse me for a short time. Even if I am obliged to write, I shall not be more than half an hour

absent, and in that time, Sir, you will be ready."

The stranger assented; and Barry enveloping himself in some yards of superfine blue cloth, fastened round his neck with the gilt resemblances of a lion's paw, thumped out the sides of an oval *chapeau-de-bras* with his fist, fixed it on his head, and in a minute was sitting in the corner of his cab, having ordered his groom to drive, not to the Foreign Office, but to Crockford's. In less than the specified half-hour, all smiles and good-humour, Barry returned. Little Jerry and the cab were drafted off to the corner of Park-lane, there to be in waiting; and Barry, bowing, placed himself, he said, "at the commands" of the stranger, whose name he had contrived to learn at the bar, and which was, as written on a portmanteau, his only luggage, the very unromantic one of ABRAHAM BRAY.

CHAPTER III.

ALL THE WORLD AT HYDE PARK CORNER.

"WHAT a glorious day!" said Barry to his companion, as they paced the *pavé* of Piccadilly. "It brings forcibly to my recollection Dyer's lines.

" ' Now Phœbus riding high
Gives lustre to the land and sky ;
No clouds, no vapours intervene,
But the gay, the open scene,
Does the face of Nature show,
In all the hues of Heaven's bow ;
Now his beams Apollo sheds
On the yellow mountains' heads,
Gilds the fleeces of the flocks,
And glitters on the broken rocks.' "

It must have been just such a morning when he wrote ' Grongar Hill.' Who would not

think, under the influence of such a cloudless sun as this, that it was Summer?"

"And is it not?" said Mr. Bray. "It is June—and in June comes MID-summer-day."

"Ay, according to the almanacks of Stationers' Hall, my good Sir; but mark you the thousands of equipages now rolling about, and be at once convinced, that whatever plough-boys or milk-maids may say in the country, it is still Winter in London. Nature, to be sure, in all her works, does cry aloud that it is Summer;—but Fashion seldom follows, and never seeks after Nature. Fashion, to use a parody,—'Fashion is its own self, and in itself, can make the Summer Winter and the Winter Summer.'"

"Oh, almighty Fashion!" exclaimed Mr. Bray, "perhaps Fashion can do more; and (to quote instead of parody) can 'Make a heaven of hell—a hell of heaven.'"

"Oh, fie!—we never mention Hell. I hope you're not a methodist?"

"Certainly not," with a frown, said Bray; "nor are you, I hope, an atheist?"

"Very fair;—I was jesting. But seriously speaking, the Reign of Fashion is a cruel

tyranny. Is it not shocking, for instance, that the miserable subjects of that fantastic despot, including almost all the noble and wealthy families of the empire, should be compelled, on such a summer's day as this, to inhale the sooty gas of the metropolis; to perambulate these burning pavements, and be choked with M'Adam's dust; whilst tantalizing recollections of refreshing breezes, amidst delightful scenery in woods, and groves, and fields, under the huge mountain's shade, or in the cool recesses of sea-worn rocks, (all which they might enjoy), mock Nature's appetite, and aggravate the torments of its sacrifice to Fashion?"

"You then, I may presume, are not one of Fashion's voluntary slaves?"

"Verily no; I detest at all times the atmosphere of London, and never sleep in it. I have a cottage and a cab, and manage between both to spend my winter in London six miles out of town. But the poor devils of dukes and dons of all sorts, who are compelled to have town establishments, they must, upon compulsion, groan and sweat in these their gilded furnaces. Look opposite (they were on the Green Park side), what a line of sweating baths, magnificent

without and splendid within! That corner one, by the bye, is the great Baring's, for which you inquired. Some wag of the press nick-named it "Yellow-oker Hall!"

Abraham Bray paused a moment, and looking at the building, said, "Questions of taste are judged by as many and various laws as there are various minds, but to questions in arithmetic all men agree in the same uniform and universal answer. I have corresponded with the father, old Sir Francis, who understood Cocker very, very well, and I presume I shall find the son, as an English merchant, worthy of his sire. My business in London, thank Heaven, involves no matter of taste."

"As to that, Sir, we have altogether done with castes—the merchant and the man of fashion are often one and the same thing in London, now a-days; and nobody marvels that the very same individual should be the fittest man in the world for a member of a Select Committee on the National Finances, and a Committee of Dilletanti for building, decorating, and furnishing palaces! Take care, Sir, that carriage is backing on the curb."

Walking on, they came in view of the whole of that grand line of residences, which includes

Lord Coventry's, the Marquis of Hertford's, the Marquis of Cholmondeley's, the Dukes of Gloucester, Devonshire, Grafton, and St. Alban's, and terminating with the Duke of Wellington's, at the entrance of Hyde Park.

"These are, indeed, noble and magnificent mansions," said Bray.

"Noble, and magnificent prisons!" rejoined Barry. "Believe me, Sir, to be in London, on such a summer's day as this, is no more the free choice of the subjects of fashion, than being restricted to the rules of the King's Bench, is the will and pleasure of prisoners for debt. But budge these nobles dare not; not a duke or a duchess, not an earl or countess among them, has spirit sufficient to break bounds:—no, though they know that at this very moment healthful and ambrosial breezes are playing round deserted villas, lodges, halls, castles, and country-seats, of every denomination, inviting the presence of these spell-bound lords and ladies, budge they dare not, till Fashion sets them free. Thus cooped up, in crowds, within the gilded walls of their prisons, many of the more delicate among these pitiable victims would actually, during summer heats, expire from suffocation or exhaustion, were it not for the merciful intervention of a few

air-breathing days, which are as necessary, and come as welcomely to the captives of fashion, as day-rules to the prisoners for debt."

"You paint strongly, Sir; but as I am a perfect Goth, a most ignorant barbarian in all these matters, you will pardon my want of comprehension. Your analogy, no doubt, ought to be very perceptible to me; but, I own, it is not."

"I will expound. Know, then, that about March or April, every year, the goddess of fashion creates a new world in London, which rolls gaily and giddily round, till towards the end of July, when the fashionable world, 'and all that it inherit, is dissolved; and, like the baseless fabric of a vision, leaves not a wreck behind.' Now, as long as this world lasts, that is, during the period I have named, to be absent from any of the nightly muster-rolls of the leaders of fashion, to neglect the regular duties of the clubs, the parks, the opera, the concert-room, and dear Almack's, is to incur the risk of a disease, called the cut, which generally brings on all the symptoms of decline, and the patient goes silently and gradually out of the (fashionable) world. But absolute desertion, that is, to

sneak into the country, to go out of town in June, for instance, save and except on those air-breathing days, when all the world goes together, is downright and absolute *felo de se*, a presumptuous and unpardonable act, that at once puts an end to existence in the fashionable world, and stamps the memory of the suicide with indelible disgrace."

"What a learned and amusing Blackstone on the laws of fashion! Would it not be charitable, Sir, to give the world your commentaries? But, pray, when and what are your air-breathing days?"

"These day-rules, for the people of fashion, these 'breathings,' or 'airings,' occur very rarely, and only when the regular orbit of their world is disturbed, by the temporary attraction of some extraordinary conjuncture, such as a grand public *déjeûné*, or *fête champêtre*, a sailing or a boxing-match, a horse-race, or a review. Now, Sir, it so happens, that this day, nay, this very hour, is precisely that you would have selected for an observation of the effects of the most powerful of these attractions on the fashionable world; and no imaginable situation could you have better chosen for your observatory

than this very spot we are now arrived at, and where, if we patiently take our stand, we may behold the Fashionable World rolling past us, being at this instant irresistibly drawn out of its London orbit by the attraction of the Derby stakes to the Epsom race-course."

The spot which Barry had selected was on the Green Park side of Piccadilly, a few feet eastward from the celebrated Hyde Park Corner turnpike, which at that time most inconveniently stood a barrier between the fashionables of Grosvenor Place and all the rest of London.

The architectural glories of the Grand Committee of Taste were then only in their embryo; and of all the marvellous magnificences that now make the mouth of John Bull gape wide with wonder, only the great Achilles of the park was at that time created.

As Abraham Bray stood nearly opposite this remarkable statue, his eye quickly saw it; and, even amidst the throng and bustle of other objects, he could not refrain from immediate inquiries.

"It is," said Barry, "a colossal statue of Achilles, cast from cannon captured by the victorious Wellington and his brave comrades—as a work of art, highly honourable to the artist

and the country. But you will smile when I tell you, that the unrobed warrior, perfect in anatomical proportions, and of such huge dimensions, and placed in one of their most fashionable public rendezvous, owes his appearance wholly and exclusively to the ladies."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Bray.

"Or else the statue lies. And that reminds me of what I said the other day to Lady Blushington, who was leaning on my arm, and criticising what she described as Westmacott's greatest work, whilst at her desire I was reading the inscription on the pedestal, which is, *verbatim et literatim*, thus :

TO ARTHUR DUKE OF WELLINGTON,
AND HIS BRAVE COMPANIONS IN ARMS,
THIS STATUE OF ACHILLES,
CAST FROM CANNON TAKEN IN THE VICTORIES
OF SALAMANCA, VITTORIA, TOULOUSE, AND WATERLOO,
IS INSCRIBED
BY THEIR COUNTRYWOMEN.

" ' Thus says this gigantic *sans-culotte*, ' remarked I to her ladyship ; ' but who, a hundred

years hence, will believe, that in the very same era, when, as history will tell, a scrupulous bishop successfully remonstrated with the manager of the Opera House, on the unpetticoated display of dancing girls' ankles, though covered with silk ; and a Lord Mayor of London decreed, that the Lilliputian copies of the Venus de Medicis on the image boys' boards, ' must be decently clothed' when exposed for sale—who will believe, that in an age of such sensitive super-refinement in lord mayors and bishops, the ladies of Great Britain and Ireland, in defiance of these blushing bishops, and long-faced lord mayors, should have set up this nudus Achilles ? Surely some future satirist will apply to this libeller of the ladies, erected at the west-end of the town, words similar to those applied by Pope to the Monument—that tall libeller of the catholics, at the east-end—and in describing Hyde Park in the year two thousand, will say—

' Where huge Achilles, naked to all eyes,
A shameless bully—lifts his shield and lies !' "

Ere Mr. Bray could utter the observation that was on his lips, in reply to this ludicrous invention of Barry—for he had never talked, nor would have dared so to talk, to Lady Blush-

ington—his voluble tongue intercepted the slow speech of his companion, and he briskly continued—

“ But we must turn our attention from statues to the animated scene before us. Stand just where you are—we cannot do better.”

By this time an immense crowd of people, among whom were many well-dressed spectators, had collected, and filled the entire space from Hyde Park Corner to the very bottom of Grosvenor Place, forming a prodigious mass, through which a regular avenue was opened for the apparently interminable line of carriages and horsemen.

“ Observe,” said Barry, “ what a train is issuing from Park Lane ; and look all the way down Piccadilly, as far as the eye can reach, one equipage is followed by another ! Turn your eye, once more, to the park, and see others, again, coming from Kensington, from Cumberland Gate, and Grosvenor Gate ; but these, and all the rest, must pass this way : no other passage to Epsom but through the straits of Grosvenor Place ; and here are we at the very garrisoned point, which, like another Gibraltar, commands the entrance of this strait, which none can pass without being overhauled by the

governor—*vulgo*, the turnpike-man ! Here, therefore, however they may tack athwart each other in the open seas, you perceive they must bear up in single line, and we have thus sufficient time to catch a glimpse of all the passengers."

The scene at this moment was indeed one which no capital in Europe, nor in the known world, could rival. Innumerable equipages of almost every description, barouches, landaus, landaulets, coaches, chariots, phaetons, curricles, gigs, stanhopes, dennets, tilburies, down to taxed carts, and even donkey carts. Many of the vehicles were magnificent in the extreme, and were drawn by the finest horses in the world, equipped and caparisoned in the richest style ; guided and attended by postilions, coachmen, grooms, outriders, and footmen ; some in gay and glittering fancy dresses ; some in superb and costly liveries, each bearing away at pleasure's summons its portion of the wealthy and the great—the most noble and the most lovely inhabitants of London.

Splendid and brilliant as was the *tout ensemble* of this grand spectacle, all other parts of it were mere dross and tinsel compared with the numerous groups of lovely women, who graced the various carriages, and

whose natural charms (eclipsing all those splendours of art, which in their absence might have won the admiration of spectators) shed such a soul-enchanting radiance where'er they passed, that, while the fascinated eye was thus engaged, the heart could feel no other sentiment than homage to the power of beauty.

Barouche following barouche, brought into view successively every variety of those unrivalled charms, every specimen of those peculiar graces, for which the ladies of Great Britain, in the spring, the prime, and even in the autumn of their beauty, are so justly celebrated throughout the world.

“ Here blush'd the virgin of bashful fifteen ;
Here bloomed a widow of fifty ;
Here dashed a bold and extravagant queen,
There aly sat a saint that look'd thrifty.”

Nor was this lovely assemblage a mere vision of beauty, produced by poets or by painters' art. No ; it was *animated* as well as *animating* beauty ; and happily there was no lack of proofs that this “ blest isle, with matchless beauty crowned,” had also “ valiant hearts to guard the fair.”

From the illustrious commander-in-chief, the royal York himself, down to the youngest

ensign in the last gazette, officers, of every rank, were seen alert that day, on Epsom duty. Some were conspicuous as gallant cavaliers, mounted on high-mettled steeds, that proudly pawed the ground, and curvetted their necks with playfulness, close to the selected carriage of some favourite fair, as if they had been conscious of the rewarding nods, and smiles, and graceful wavings, of ungloved lily hands, which thrilled the bosoms of their happy riders.

Lo, here a happy lover, driving the convenient curricie, which gives him kind opportunity for sweet discourse, *solus cum sola*, with the adored object of his heart, entrusted to the race-ground by special grace of doating parents, under the care of her proud protector. Never before were his impatient pair of bloods so fretted; for, see how he curbs them in, to a snail's-pace, in order to lengthen out the time, since he cannot increase the distance, of this delightful drive to Epsom.

Next follows a young and thoughtless son of Mars, of ardent temperament, full of youthful blood, indignant of restraint, and eager for the field. He, at the imminent peril of his own life and his fair companion's, in defiance of her terrors and the screams of passengers around him, cuts in between two carriages, breaks the line,

trundles his tandem over orange women and their stalls, and splintering a post, urges on his leader to as full a gallop as if Gretna, instead of Epsom, were the goal !

But let it not be imagined that all the happy beaux in this delightful scene were red-coats. No such thing. For though we accord our boundless praise to the whole army, as well as navy, of the united kingdom, for proverbial gallantry, and though most cordially with the poet we agree, that

“ None but the brave deserve the fair ;”

yet do we not admit that none but “ warriors” are the brave. On this very day we saw hundreds of gay and gallant youths, whose names were never, and will never be, enrolled in army or in navy lists ; but whose sinews were as strong, and hearts as valiant, as the bravest of their fellow-countrymen, professionally trained to arms.

In this happy throng were comprised individuals of all ranks, professions, trades, and callings, from the highest duke to the lowest operative, all emulous to evince how much they gloried in the smiles of their favourite fair. Nor let the titled beauty, who honours this description with perusal, spurn indignantly from her

jewelled hands the faithful page which dares record the fact, that, mingling with coroneted phaetons and barouches on that day, was actually seen Sall Smith, the envy of a well-known alley, riding in a borrowed sand-cart, but drawn by sweetheart Joe, the dustman's own dear Neddy ; whilst he, so gaily drest, all in his best, was doing the amiable to his charming Sally, with the genuine grace of a St. Giles's beau.

Such was the real and actual scene on which the contemplative stranger, for some minutes, gazed in silence ; and then, turning to Barry, said, with a somewhat solemn tone of voice—

“ This spectacle, Sir, is one of which the happy subjects of this empire would be more proud if they could feel, as I do, all that it tells ! At Paris, at Madrid, at Vienna, at Venice, and Constantinople, I have witnessed many public festivals, and many gorgeous processions, but no where on the face of the whole globe is there to be seen altogether such a spectacle as this ! Coronations and courts of emperors—the pomp and imposing magnificence of the processions and the temples of papal or pagan priests, or the military splendour of a despot's army in grand review—what is there the eye beholds in all these pageants at which the heart of the

philanthropist does not sicken? What is the most splendid pomp, the most dazzling magnificence that surrounds the mightiest monarch, compared with these multiplied testimonials of the free diffusion of national wealth, and its unchecked general enjoyment by all the various classes of this happy people! The splendour and magnificence of this procession, though proofs of the high state of luxury and the arts, have not been purchased at the price of the blood or sweat of millions of despairing slaves. In every equipage I behold either the legacy of an illustrious ancestor won in the field of liberty, and preserved by the practice of social and domestic duties, or, as in more numerous instances, the fruit of individual industry and enterprise, excited and fostered by that spirit of freedom, and those just laws, which equally enrich the state and protect the subject. But I forget myself—you must excuse me—my habits have made me a soliloquist, and I am too apt to talk to myself even in company.”

Barry, who was more and more convinced by every word the traveller uttered, that “he was a secret worth knowing,” though he deemed the last speech all “twaddle,” praised it highly, but, at the same time, with a view to let the old

gentleman gently down from his stilts, he directed his attention to a queer, funny-faced fellow, with a white apron tied over his smalls—a tin box, filled with gingerbread nuts, pendant from his shoulders, and who was carrying in his hand a round board, painted with figures, like the face of a dial with a moveable index, which he was twirling round with the other, and most comically singing out, “Come, my worthy masters, now’s your time, who’ll prick in my lucky lottery, all prizes and no blanks. Now, my pretty girls and boys, now’s your time.” The “hot mutton-pie” man, and the “fine china orange” girls, contested the market with the “spice gingerbread lottery,” and their “cries,” mingling with the tittering of merry maidens and the practical jokes of their sweethearts, gave the semblance of a fair to one part of the scene, for which Percival Barry, proudly turning up his nose at such low mirth, attempted to apologise to his new acquaintance.

“God bless their holiday faces—it glads my heart to see them!” said Mr. Bray, with warmth. “I let drop the word *freedom* just now, Sir: how often is it echoed—how little understood as applied to old England. Here, here we see one of its happy illustrations. Long, long may it

continue ! In my opinion, Sir, the chief glory of this scene is its free and miscellaneous character. This is a truly English jubilee. No masks are wanted here to bring all ranks for a few mad hours to a level, as in their carnivals abroad. Here individuals, of all degrees, estates, and professions, are assembled for a common holiday, openly and fearlessly displaying their honest faces in their own various characters and stations ! No armed janissaries, no gens d'armes, no Swiss or Cossack guards, no disguised familiars of the horrid inquisition, no secret agents of a tyrannical police, are intermingled with this joyous crowd of free and independent fellow-subjects ! Tell me, oh, tell me, ye too aspiring Lucifers, who disdain all governments, ye visionary dreamers of millenniums on earth, where will ye find such gentle rule as in this happy isle ? Well might the Russian autocrat express his wonder how such free people could be governed, when he beheld no instruments or ministers of that coercive system which awes men into slaves."

Barry perceived, with some surprise, that his attempt to unstilt his companion had rather increased than diminished his altitude : he began to think him a patriot *par excellence* ; but,

from the close of the last apostrophe, concluded that, whatever else he might be, he was certainly no radical. At this moment the eye of Barry caught a glimpse of one of his earliest acquaintances in London, his tutor and senior fellow-labourer in the same office, when the "man of fashion" that is, was first "initiated a gentleman of the press." He instinctively pulled the brim of his hat still further over his forehead, and, bringing up the lion's paws nearly to his nose, hoped to escape a recognition which pride or some other cause of concealment made him just then most anxious to avoid.

The person he was shying was about his own age, of an open and intelligent countenance, dressed moderately in demi-fashion, but with a green silk handkerchief tied round his neck. He was engaged in conversation with a much younger man, who had not long arrived from "Modern Athens," and was in training for the same profession that Barry the fashionable wished to forget he had once belonged to.

To his great mortification, however, the dreaded couple drew nearer and nearer, walking arm in arm, and talking loudly and carelessly; and, by their movement, Barry was convinced they intended to occupy a station close to his

right arm. In an instant he shifted places with his companion, and, never at a loss for invention, whispered him—"Be silent awhile, and listen to the remarks of that gentleman coming this way—he in the green silk handkerchief. He is a reporter for the papers," continued he, "and you will be not only amused, but most likely learn much you wish to know." He concluded by holding his fore-finger to his lip; and, whirling round from Mr. Bray, his back was turned not only on his old friend and tutor, but on his new acquaintance.

It was all in vain: Fitzgerald (such was the name of the gentleman who would not be cut) had recognized the face and marked the movement of Barry, and, passing, Abraham Bray, accosted the man of fashion with—"Why, what, in the name of wonder, ails you, Barry? Have you the *tic-douloureux* in your nose, or are you hiding your sweet face in compassion to the pretty girls, or from fear of the ugly bailiffs that are abroad to-day?"

Chagrined as he was, Barry saw there was now no retreating, and therefore resolved to fight. Dropping his temporary vizor, he held out his hand to be shaken; and, laughing, or rather, affecting to laugh, he then pointed to his toes,

to explain how unsuitably he was made up for the time of day.

"You see, my good fellow, what a queer figure! I've been up all night: going home, met my friend. I would not be staggered at this moment, in this trim, by certain persons you know, Fitz—no, not for all the wealth of rich Russell! By the by, my dear Fitz, a word in your ear;" and so saying, he drew Fitzgerald aside, and, in a whisper, inaudible to Bray, told him a wonderful tale of his own quick invention, accounting for the attention he himself paid to the stranger, and calculated to fix the eyes of this gentleman of the press also on Bray.

"Do me the favour, my good Fitz," he then said, "to be my front file—for mercy's sake cover me from the gaze of those gimblet-eyed old maids in the hack postchaise. They are the two Miss Winkles—the famous blue stockings, with their brother the doctor. They are as satirical as they are ugly; and I should be shewn up to a certainty if seen in this dress on the *pavé*."

"O the misery of moving in the fashionable world," said Fitzgerald, in a half whisper; "the drudgery of reporting, or the dread of being

reported, say honestly, Barry, which, after all, is the worst."

"Mum's the order of the day," was the significant reply.

Just then came in view the elegantly fancied and costly vehicle of a celebrated beauty, almost matchless for her personal charms, but frail as she was fair. All eyes were directed to the spot where it moved.

"What lovely vision comes here?" said Heron, Fitzgerald's companion.

"Lovely vision! why, Heron, that's too warm for the climate of Caledonia—have a care, young mon."

"Nay, now be serious for a moment; I want to ask a thousand questions."

"All in a moment, doubtless—very modest. Ah," said Barry, peeping an instant out of his blue cloth entrenchments, and addressing himself to Abraham Bray,—“ah, here she comes indeed. Observe, Sir, that most beautiful low phaeton. Romeo Coates's car was nothing to it. Is it not superbly elegant?"

It merited the epithet. It was built after an original model of a French nobleman, and was similar in shape to the shell chariot in the cele-

brated picture of Venus rising from the sea ; the mouldings and ornaments were silver, richly chased, and highly burnished ; but the talents of a first-rate artist had been put in requisition to decorate various parts with exquisite little paintings also from original designs, which were finished with the perfection of miniatures, and brilliantly varnished. This fairy vehicle was drawn by four milk-white ponies, guided by Lilliputian Cupid-looking postilions, in elegant fancy dresses, and preceded by two outriders in tasteful liveries.

Seated, or rather reclining in this phaeton, was one of the most enchanting female forms imaginable, whose appearance attracted universal notice, and called forth a general buz of admiration. Her head was resting on an ungloved hand and arm, so celebrated for their perfect beauty, both in tints and symmetry, that Royal Academicians had exulted in opportunities of studying them as models. Her taper fingers at the same time held lightly a rich lace veil, that fell gracefully among the ringlets of her dark hair from a well formed morning head dress, and, floating in the breeze, now concealed and now displayed such glorious eye-beams, such smiling coral lips, such a lovely formed forehead, that

the coldest anchorite could not have gazed on such bewitching beauty without re-kindled feelings of delight and rapture. As Abraham Bray was about to inquire of Barry who this queen of the fairies was, the more ardent feelings of the youthful Heron were addressed to his friend Fitzgerald. The four stood all close together.

"Never, never have I seen anything so very lovely, so very beautiful. She is some foreign princess as I take it, isn't she, Fitzgerald?" said the young Scot, with simplicity.

"You guess well, Heron," said Fitzgerald archly; "she is Queen of Cyprus; but it is too bad that such a perfect Venus should be almost the only female we see alone."

"Be quiet, Fitz," said Barry; "wait a moment; yonder is the gallant Mars who protects this Venus. He's on the move this way."

"I never saw the celebrated hero," said Fitzgerald. "Which is he?"

"Observe that tall, gaunt figure over the way; him on horseback, close to the obelisk, in a military surtout. I mean him who is talking to that officer bedecked with so many foreign orders."

"What, that Don Quixote-looking equestrian with the fur cap on his—head—I was going to

say, and certainly a head there must be on that long pole of a neck ; but as for a face, unless the collar of his surtout were lowered, and those enormous furze-bushes of whiskers partially removed, I will not so positively decide."

" The whiskers are of that species, Fitz, which may be removed without the aid of razors. I've seen his cheeks unwhiskered, if cheeks they may be called, which are but shreds of dry and yellow skin, sucked in by every breath drawn from his wheezing lungs."

" He seems a mere skeleton."

" And is so. They say, that whenever he is lifted out of those huge military boots, his servants are in the greatest terror, lest, when they set him down again on what are called his legs, the marrowless bones should fly in splinters. You sighed just now, Fitz, as you remarked the modern Perdita was all alone. What would have been your feelings at beholding yon veteran Lothario by her side ?"

" Horrid murder !" exclaimed Fitzgerald ; " the thing's impossible. Barry, this is one of your own newest. Why, man, the story of the ' Beauty and the Beast ' is not so monstrous. It is impossible."

" Ah, Fitz, you know but little of the fashion-

able world; and even that little you get by hearsay. Such things, I happen to know, are quite possible; and, what is worse, quite true. The beauty is his own—his gold has bought her.”

“Bought her!” exclaimed Abraham Bray, a little off his guard. “In nature’s holy name, for what? To look at?”

“No,” said Barry, coolly, “to be looked at. To make a shew of her at his own table, and talk about her at the Horse Guards and at the clubs; to lock her up in an Opera box, and oblige particular friends with the *entrée*; to parade her and her ponies in the park; and sometimes to sport her at a review, or, as to-day, upon a race-course.”

“The slave-trade is an innocent use of gold, compared with this,” said Fitzgerald, with all his native warmth.

“Hush!” said the hacknied Barry; “here comes the golden skeleton.”

In consequence of a stoppage at the turnpike, there stood, close to the pavement, near our club of four, a fashionable cab and shewy horse, in which were a cornet and lieutenant of a then celebrated regiment of hussars, the expensive splendour of whose dress and accoutrements rendering it an object of universal observation, the manners

and character of its officers were more severely scrutinized, and with less liberality, than all the rest of the names that fill the army list. Their foibles were magnified to faults, and the natural effects of an aristocratic education maliciously misconstrued into a brutal love of exciting disgust. Some thoughtless expressions of ridicule offended the vulgar spouse of a rich *parvenu*, and her more vulgar daughters, at a county assembly, when immediately all manner of absurdities were invented by malice, multiplied and magnified by scandal, reported by the press, and repeated by the whole town, until expressions, which in their origin would have excited utter contempt, as too absurd to pass for humorous invention, were at length gulped down by credulous dupes of the calumny, as the actual mode of speech used by the younger branches of the nobility of Britain. One of the effects of this general persecution was precisely what naturally might be expected among high-spirited youth; for in any manner to proscribe a phrase which one of them had used, perhaps accidentally, would be certain to render it adoptive by the whole of a corps, too proud for censure and too young for ridicule; and thus, the spirit of bravado perpetuated for months the

folly of a moment. Sensible that their discourse was listened to, these two young men, who were cousins, and belonged to one of the first families in England, amused themselves in talking at the crowd, in just such ridiculous jargon as the comedy of "Pride shall have a Fall" had then made all the cockney 'prentices and milliners' girls believe was the serious language of British officers.

"Muffs and meerschaums!" exclaimed one to the other, "what a bore is this!" just as the golden skeleton above alluded to by Barry rode up to them, and inquired, in a voice of second infancy, interrupted by a hectic cough—

"Pray—have—you-u-u seen my-y—beauty—pass?"

"Muffs and meerschaums, colonel, what a question!" said the younger. "Your beauty must have passed long ere either of us were born. We have seen and known your valour; we of the glorious —— can't shut our eyes to that."

"Si-i-ily boy—sil-ly boy—you-you-you know who-o-m I mean—m-y—He-le-na."

"Muffs and meerschaums—what a horrid blunder;" said the other officer. "Oh, certainly, we saw the lovely Helen, and marked the road she took."

“ But then, you know,” added the other, “ we of the glorious —— don’t blab;” raising the forefinger of his right hand to his nose. “ Muffs and meerschaums, colonel, there is such a Paris on the look-out for your Helena to-day ! I saw his courser close at the silver wheels of lovely Helena’s car—down Grosvenor-place they flew. You must remember a certain gallant Austrian—but adieu, colonel ! adieu ! we of the glorious —— don’t blab.”

“ Ma-a-ad caps—ma-ad caps—ha ! ha ! heigh ! heigh ! heigh !” squeaked and wheezed the colonel, pretending to laugh, but coughing in earnest ; and off he cantered his charger, in pursuit of his beautiful Helena, followed by the cab of the young officers of the glorious ——”

“ Is there any meaning in their caution ?” said Fitzgerald to Barry.

“ The scandal goes,” said Barry, “ that a rich and noble foreigner, at this time the guest of a certain ambassador, having obtained the *entrée* to their box at the Opera, has made truly princely overtures, such as, added to the difference of half a century of years in his favour, are likely to render him the Paris of this Helena. It is whispered, that immediate preparations are making for their flight over seas and mountains,

a species of expedition for which the mere wings of Cupid are not to be solely relied upon as a safe conveyance. Nothing is more probable, therefore, than that in a very few days (that is, if the wind does not previously blow asunder and disperse the shreds and patches of which it is composed), this *anatomie vivante*, this spectre Lothario of eighty-four will be plunged into the depths of despair for the loss of a toy, on which in two years he is said to have lavished twenty thousand at least."

"And then, poor silly creature," said Mr. Abraham Bray, "what will remain to him in exchange for his gold so squandered?"

"Nothing!" replied Barry, pleased to have won the attention of the traveller, "nothing but the anticipation of that everlasting ridicule, which will settle on his name, by a niche in her memoirs, when penury, and disease, and premature old age, shall compel this now-adored beauty to purchase food by supplying the prurient curiosity of a scandal-loving world with exaggerated pictures of the follies and the vices of her youth!"

"Why, Barry," said Fitzgerald, "what lofty stilts you mount! Oh for a tub and a stiff-starched band, and what a congregation would

soon surround you. You are really a ranter of the first order ; but Heaven forbid you should be a prophet ! No, rather would I see you burnt for a wizard, than believe it possible that you prophecy truly the fate of that lovely woman !”

“ Amen, amen !” said the young Scot, with more than a Scotchman’s usual ardour.

“ Thank you, gentlemen, both,” replied Barry, “ for your burning zeal ! but we all know that such things have been ; and he prophesies at no presumptuous risk, who says, such things will be hereafter !”

“ Such things then, Barry, ought not to be,” exclaimed the warm-hearted Fitzgerald with enthusiasm ; “ and, if they are, on the false flatterers themselves, and not on ruined beauty, let the ignominy fall ! As to that idol of the hour just passed by, tell me, if you can, why Burke’s description of the adoration paid to the Queen of France, in her meridian of power and beauty, may not at the present moment be applied to Helena ? Is she not at least as beautiful, and almost as much adored ? The dazzling sunshine of cloudless prosperity too often blinds ; the artful flatteries of sycophants too easily mislead ; and the constant incense of adu-

lation, most insidiously intoxicates the wisest, firmest, noblest, and best of men ! And shall we coldly marvel that the gentle, tender, and confiding, lovely creature, woman, is not more temptation-proof than man ! No, Barry, no ; rather let us invoke some pitying angel's influence, to warn the beauteous victim of seduction, now dreaming on a couch of roses, that the dear-bought power of her youthful charms is but a short-lived spell. Oh that now, when by all around her she is adored as if her beauty rendered her omnipotent, and is deluded into the belief, that all she ever can desire she may command, as tribute to that beauty : oh that now some friendly monitor could place before her the mere possibility of the arrival of that dreadful hour, when waking as from a trance of opium's deleterious delights, she will find the world a wilderness to her ; and herself a solitary, despised, and famished wanderer, without home, without friend, without hope, nay, even without pity. The riches she now suffers so heedlessly to fly away, unconscious of their magic power, she then will sigh for in vain ! Wealth, even if it be the wages of a youth of error, and therefore, cannot purchase peace of mind, or fellowship with innocence and virtue, is at least

a shield against the censure of the world ; and the contempt which interest makes men conceal, they soon cease to feel ! But if a life of moral error lead only to an old age of penury, oh in what a pitiless tempest of their fellow-creatures' scorn and mockery must the last agonies of such a poor wretch be breathed ; for though penitence may hope to gain the pardoning smiles of heaven, the sons of earth smile—on the prosperous alone !”

Abraham Bray put forth a greedy ear to every syllable of this effusion of a feeling heart ; and he minuted a memorandum in his mind, to seek hereafter a better acquaintance with the speaker. Young Heron thought him more eloquent than Canning, though not so great as Brougham ; and Barry said :—“ Who’s in stilts now, I prithee, good Fitz ? Talk of a tub and a band—why, man, thou shalt have silk apron and lawn sleeves, and lecture all the beauties of St. James’s into prudence, if not penitence. Striking their pretty ears with such fine words, they never will suspect you are but elaborating the old homely and neglected proverb of ‘ Make hay while the sun shines,’ which, by-the-by, is a good theme for Theodore Hook. I’ll put him up to it, and you shall see how cleverly he’ll

handle it in his next series of 'Sayings and Doings.' But *à propos* to the magic of wealth, here comes the rich Russell."

"Where? where? shew me!" exclaimed Abraham Bray, every feature of his face worked up to an expression of intensely anxious curiosity.

This momentary burst of feeling did not escape the observation of Fitzgerald any more than that of Barry, who was in some degree prepared for it.

At some little distance off, a yellow phaeton, with a pair of greys, and a pair of grooms, was pointed out to Bray by Barry. "The reins," said he, "are in the hands of Lord Belford; his companion is Mr. Russell, the Foundling of Fortune, as certain fools (I beg your pardon, Fitz) have taught the town to call him."

"Nay, Barry, shake not your curly locks at me, thou can'st not say I did it; although I am bound to confess Mr. Russell owes this nickname in some measure to my connection with your quondam, and my present friend and master, good-natured, but too conceited Dunmore, whom time and prosperity do not improve: for as he finds his paper pays now much better than

it ever did in even its most classic days, he adduces its success as the best criterion of its merit, and therefore neither I nor the 'Lecturer on Political Economy' himself can turn him from his course. But notwithstanding his want of education and classical taste," continued Fitzgerald, "Dunmore's a jewel of a fellow, and a gentleman in conduct. I owe him more gratitude than I fear I shall ever have opportunity to evince."

"And so do scores besides, to my knowledge," said Barry.

"Yes," continued Fitzgerald; "more than one clever barrister, with the wool-sack now fairly in view, owe to Dunmore's encouraging patronage the means of obtaining those dinners, which it is absolutely necessary to eat both in and out of Hall, ere any of the honourable societies could give them their call. Now the probation of the gallery, which some tyrants, I could name, make torture to the feelings of gentlemen and scholars, Dunmore, by the genuine kindness of his nature, continues to render at once lucrative, honourable, and agreeable."

"Very true," rejoined Barry, "as I am sure your young friend here will find. But still—"

then turning suddenly to Bray,—“ The phæton will be up, Sir, in a minute. But still, Fitz,”—turning again to Fitzgerald,—“ after all, Dunmore is considered, in certain circles, as having a little degraded the dignity of the press ; inasmuch as he is favourite pander to the public appetite for the marvellous, and pampers that vitiated taste it is his province to correct.”

“ Dunmore, however, disclaims the censorial office ; he says preaching is the province of the pulpit and the business of the parsons, who are previously paid for their sermons, be they ever so dull, whilst he must make his papers such as will sell, or get no pay at all.”

During this colloquy, Abraham Bray had his eyes rivetted on the yellow phæton, whilst his ears were open to catch every word of the discourse of these gentlemen of the press. He observed that the phæton had drawn out of line and stopped, and that Lord Belford was speaking to one of the grooms behind. It was still stationary, and the noble driver seemed awaiting the coming up of some carriage in the rear of the line. Neither Barry nor Fitzgerald were looking that way, and the former thus replied to the last sentence of the latter.

“A sophistical rogue! Who ever wished to make a pulpit of his paper? We know his office is to shew the world as it is—‘to hold, as ’twere, the mirror up to nature.’ But then, the direction of the mirror is the essential point. Let it shew nature, or truth, which is the same thing, in what it does exhibit, but taste, as well as utility, may surely be consulted in the selection of the objects exhibited.”

“Dunmore would only laugh at such an Attic view of the subject,” said Fitzgerald.

“I understand so,” said Barry, “and I own that the stipendiary votaries of classic taste, who think to live by *Attic* wit must be content to live in *attics*. That’s the first pun to-day, ’pon my honour.”

“A sorry one indeed, and exactly one too many in an advocate for taste,” said Fitzgerald; “but Dunmore is the more consistent fellow; he affects no love of taste—denies allegiance to it, and will pay it no tribute. Hence the alliances he forms with Bow-street runners and the bottle-holders to prize-fighters—the high premiums he will pay any first-rate doer of a “barbarous, cruel, and most inhuman murder”—the smartest getter-up of a racy *crim. con.*, or the first discoverer of gentlemen forgers and lady swindlers;

whilst to the poet, the wit, the scholar, or the connoisseur, who presents an article, probably in the forlorn hope of obtaining thereby a dinner, Dunmore uniformly puts on the firm frown of decisive discouragement ; but frequently at the same time (in justice to his heart let me say it), he has slipped a piece of gold into the trembling hand of the adventurer, with, ‘ Pray accept this, Sir, in return for your trouble in calling, and the preference of the offer, but let me persuade you to believe what I say, and do not fool away your time in such matters as these, which the town don’t care a rush for.’ ”

“ I wonder how you two such opposites in taste have continued to amalgamate so well and so long together,” said Barry.

“ The secret,” he replied, “ is this. We know each other’s wants. We are useful to one another ; but as in the present glut of talent in the London market, Dunmore can much more conveniently dispense with my services than I can with his drafts on his banker ; I only trouble him with so much of my opposing criticisms on the score of taste, as his well-known pertinacity is likely to receive without displeasure. It is galling, however, to see, every now and then, a delightfully piquant little anecdote of high life,

which you know one occasionally gathers up in society, and which, of course, one takes pains to compress into a space, all point, so that it may glide, as it were, upon the attention of the reader, in an elegant paragraph of half-a-dozen lines, with all the graceful ease of a speech of Lady Teazle or Mrs. Candour;—I say it is very galling to behold, the next morning, this literary *bijou* distorted by the avarice and bad taste of Dunmore, into a laboured, lengthy, vulgar article, filling, perhaps, two columns, and headed, in small caps., with one of, what he calls, his taking titles, fit only for the catch-penny stories of Grub-street, in former times, or the similar productions of the methodistical tract societies of the present day. But above all that ever occurred in this way, I confess I was most especially mortified with his barbarous treatment of that really excellent account I had procured, from authentic sources, of the extraordinary history of Mr. Russell, and, above all, by his abominable title to my tale.”

At the mention of Russell's name, Abraham Bray turned his eyes, as well as his ears, to the speaker, who continued—

“The materials were put into my hands by my very best friend, a nobleman, whose first-

rate talents, as a scholar and a statesman, are only surpassed by his spotless honour and inflexible integrity. He condescended to request of me, as a favour, that which he had every right to claim as his due—my best services in introducing to the public a few particulars of the romantic story of Mr. Russell, then nearly of age, and about to make his *début* on the stage of the fashionable world. ‘Understand me, Fitzgerald,’ said my noble friend, ‘I deprecate puff, and, above every thing, the Munchausen style. The simple facts of Mr. Russell’s story, as believed by himself, are these: He was imported, when between three and four years old, from the Cape of Good Hope into the port of London, being consigned by the celebrated miser, Van Voorst, of the former place, to the still more celebrated saint, James Gregory, Esq., of the latter, his well-known successor. Soon after the infant’s importation, the drivelling old miser died, dividing immense wealth between Gregory and this infant, named Osmond Russell, who, according to Van Voorst’s account, and no other is known, was born about the year 1804, under circumstances of peculiar secrecy and mystery; which remain unexplained to this hour.

“ ‘ From an homeward-bound English ship in the beginning of that year, landed at the Cape, a gentleman, a lady, and her nurse; the lady so ill as to be carried in a litter. The gentleman inquired for the residence of Peter Van Voorst; he did not, however, enter the habitation, but, as soon as the lady and nurse were received kindly by Van Voorst, departed, re-embarked, and sailed. Very soon after her arrival, this lady died in child birth, leaving the infant Russell wholly to the guardianship of the old miser. Now, who this female was, even if Van Voorst himself knew, Gregory persists in declaring to Russell, he never revealed. Adopted, however, by Van Voorst, he left him those riches, which have been so well managed by his guardian, that, though, in fact, he is a foundling, he is a foundling worth at least a couple of millions of money. Such a marvellous story as this, in the keeping of any other man than the cold and cautious Mr. Gregory, would have been long since fine food for the gossips of the town; but Gregory has silently nursed and obscurely brought up the orphan inheritor of Van Voorst's wealth; for, by the miser's will, he was appointed sole guardian of the person, as well as trustee of the property,

of the child, till he attained the age of twenty-one, with only two obligations, which were peremptory and unavoidable ; namely, that, at a certain age, the boy was to be sent to Eton for education, and from thence to the university of Cambridge. Now then, mark me, Fitzgerald,' continued my noble friend, ' the first years of his childhood were spent, you must recollect, in the family of a man who has built his reputation in the world on the affectation of a sanctity more sanctified than the rest of the saints. He was taught to believe that his benefactor, Van Voorst, nominated Gregory from principle to be, in all respects, and for every purpose of authority as well as care, his father. Well—at the appointed age he becomes an Eton boy, and runs the gauntlet there as the nephew, or the cousin, or ward, or something they knew not what, of one of the most celebrated Puritans of the age. Fortunately for this young Methodist, as he was nicknamed by his fellows, that excellent young man, Lord Belford, was then very popular at Eton. He saw the peculiar situation of Russell—he offered him his juvenile but powerful friendship. It was accepted and duly appreciated : it was continued at Cambridge, and this friendship, still existing,

I have no doubt has snatched an ingenuous youth from a life of misery and gloom, and disappointed Gregory, and his brethren of the woeful countenance, of the harvest they anticipated in working two millions of pounds sterling by the agency of a trained tool. The hour is fast approaching, however, when, becoming of age, this young man, foundling as he is, will be hailed by the world as one of the most fortunate of men ! But his good fortune is not without alloy. He is sensitive to a painful degree on the obscurity of his birth. He has been introduced to me by Lord Belford ; and I am greatly deceived if he be not one of the noblest and most liberal-minded young men with whose confidence I have ever had the happiness to be honoured : but he shrinks from the notoriety of his approaching *entré* into society, and, above all things, dreads that exhibition in the public press, which, from his immense fortune, connected as it is with the romance of his story, must be his lot. He knows that Gregory, and his familiars of the Puritanical inquisition, have too much influence by the length of their purse with too many public journals of the day ; and he knows that their cherished axiom of—‘those who are not for

us are against us'—will lead them to treat him as an enemy, because he firmly refuses to enlist himself as their dupe. Now then, Fitzgerald, up to this moment, the town knows nothing of Russell : his history has been hitherto confined to a few ; but we learn that the saints are preparing an announcement which is to sound their own praise and glory, and, without regard to the feelings of Russell, to pledge him to the methodistical squad. Take, then, the few facts here minuted down by myself from the lips of Russell, and tell the world, in the simplest and least pompous way possible, what may be fairly expected from the talents and good principles, no less than the great fortune, of Mr. Russell. It is an interesting story ; but especially remember, if you wish to oblige us, be simple and modest : above all, no puff—no parade—no Warren's Patent Blacking, or Macassar Oil ! ”

Abraham Bray here interrupted Fitzgerald with an emotion of joy he felt it impossible to conceal. “ My good Sir—my worthy Sir—pardon the liberty which a stranger takes—but I feel such an increasing interest in this—this—this—that is, in this young gentleman you are speaking of, that I am extremely anxious to

know who the truly noble person is that seems to—”

“ I regret, Sir, believe me, since you seem so interested, that I do not consider myself at liberty to name the nobleman who thus honoured me.”

Barry pulled Mr. Bray by the sleeve, and by a significant winking of the eye, and other gestures, cautioned him to silence ; intimating, that at a proper season he would prove himself the true “ Sir Oracle.”

Fitzgerald resumed.

“ It happened that at that very time there was a public situation vacant, which many of my friends had pointed out as peculiarly eligible for me, and which, from certain circumstances, my noble friend's interest could have commanded ! My wish was on my tongue, as he delivered me the materials I was to work up into the article alluded to, but my modesty, or rather perhaps my pride, prompted the thought, that something in the nature of a service, however humble—even the test of my desire to serve him would back my petition for the place, when on the next day I should present him with the paper containing the proof of my strict adherence to his direction. Well, I composed the article—

Old Jackson gave it his editorial sanction; he even praised it: and, vanity apart, it was an interesting *novelette*, briefly, and I think not inelegantly told. But my ill star reigned that evening; for in the proof slip of the article accidentally placed within his view, Dunmore's keen eye caught the word 'Foundling,' which, as I had used it, was far from offensive or improper, and curiosity induced him to read the whole tale. His ruling passion rose in full force, and violently ringing the bell in his private room, legions of little devils from every corner of his dominions were instantly before their master. In the same breath he exclaimed, 'Mr. Fitzgerald is gone, I suppose? go and tell Mr. Jackson I am lengthening an article for the inner form, nothing political, merely among the domestic occurrences; so he need not sit up to read it.' To another devil he cried out, 'Go and tell Smith to come to me; and then let Saunders know I want him. Bid Lindsey and another compositor stop: and you, my boy,' to the last imp who waited, 'run and see if any of the gentlemen are in their room.' Unfortunately for Mr. Russell, and for me, there was one, a worn-out hackney in the service, an old man, who had been in his youth an usher at a

school ; an excellent Grecian, but a most vulgar writer in English, even when he was sober. Compassion principally prompted Dunmore to take poor Stiles on the establishment, at a most slender salary ; nor probably would pity alone have secured the miserable old man this scant subsistence, but that his services, from his peculiar connections, were valuable to the paper in the ' Old Bailey' line ! Somehow or other this poor creature, who is a saint when sober, a reprobate when drunk, has ingratiated himself into favour with some of those well-meaning individuals, who seem to have instituted themselves lay-assistants to the reverend and regular Ordinary of Newgate ; and under the patronage and dictation of one of these auxiliary confessors, Stiles writes those Execution Scenes at the Old Bailey, which, strange to say, are become one of the most popular features of a fashionable newspaper ! Feel for me, Barry," continued Fitzgerald, " when I tell you it was to the hands of this doer of dying speeches, this penman of penitential letters, that Dunmore, after midnight, committed my authentic article of about half a column to be spun out by brains, under the influence of gin and water, into four whole columns of stuff fit only for the Newgate Calen-

dar ! Dunmore gave him some hints to add to my facts ; and Stiles himself, from his evangelical connection, knew all about Gregory. To it they went, and between them, Sir, they committed the murder of my hopes and my article at the same instant. No sooner was the foul deed done, than Dunmore, glorying in this most barbarous act of literary butchery, exclaimed, with one of his broadest grins, and a more than usually brisk friction of the palms of his hands against each other, ‘ This will do, this will do, Master Stiles—this will tell, Sir ; poor Mr. Fitzgerald won’t know his own milk and water article again. He’ll say, according to custom, I have spoiled it, that it is in vulgar taste, and not according to the classics ; but who that knows the world, and understands trap, cares for the classics, eh, Stiles ? Leave me alone : I think I ought to know how to tickle the gudgeons by this time ; forty years is no common apprenticeship. The article now only wants a good catching head, and, I have it, eh, Stiles ? Yes, that will do—what do you think of the ‘ Foundling of Fortune ? ’ yes, yes, that is the trap for the natives ! Here, boy,’ to an attendant devil, ‘ run and tell Thompson to wet down paper immediately for five hundred

extras! I will have a broadside, and keep the press standing till noon.'

" Morning came; I rose early; my first thoughts were a confused mixture of Mr. Russell, my patron, and the vacant place. I hurried to the office, to get my paper, intending to wait upon my noble friend, at his breakfast-table. Assembled before the doors and windows of the office, I was astonished to behold a prodigious crowd struggling for places, to read three or four papers, wafered up for public perusal. I approached, and never was human head so near an apoplexy as was mine, when the horrid words, in full-sized caps, 'FOUNDLING OF FORTUNE,' as a head to four columns, caught my eye. Staggering into the office, I ran over the nauseous article, and then tearing the paper into pieces, gave full vent to my indignant and outraged feelings, ran into the street, with the fury of a bedlamite, vowing everlasting hatred and revenge against the perpetrator of, what at that moment I considered an irreparable injury. For two days I confined myself a prisoner—would see no creature but my family. The words of my noble friend rung in my ears, 'No Warren's Blacking, no Macassar Oil.' Why, Sir, the grossest puffs of

Packwood, Van Butchel, or Doctor Solomons, himself, are modest and elegant compositions compared to this Grub-street history of the Foundling of Fortune. What would my noble friend suppose? I could not think with calmness on the subject. On the third day, I left town for a relation's house, at a short distance from Tunbridge Wells, enjoining my family to conceal from all inquirers the place of my retreat, and to address all my letters to the post-office at the Wells. It appeared to me, that this single act of Dunmore's must change the whole current of my life. I thought of a variety of plans for the future, for I did not then believe it possible that any apology, explanation, or overtures from Dunmore, could recal me to my abandoned post. Nor would they ever by their own influence alone, but they came accompanied by such a letter from my noble friend, that, if it were permitted me to publish it, would elevate him to a rank with the wisest and most eloquent of ancient or modern advocates; at the same time that it evinces a perfect knowledge of the world, and breathes a spirit of the purest benevolence. Its ultimate effects were to reconcile me to Dunmore, which step was made the condition of his own

continued favour; for he himself estimated to a nicety the compound character of that master-manufacturer of newspapers, and therefore compromised the forgiveness of what, however, he considered no trivial injury, for the aid which he was aware Dunmore could afford him in public objects, of much higher importance to himself, to Mr. Russell, and to the welfare of the country, and of mankind. He informed me he had called on the editor at the office for explanation, the very day of publication, and my manuscript being shown him as an authority in part, he gave that his unqualified applause. From poor Stiles himself I subsequently had the particulars of the scene I have related to you. Dunmore made every reparation in his power, and, in fact, being ignorant of the special circumstances under which the article was furnished by me, I must acquit him of intentional injury or offence; but to his ruling passion for popular articles, with catching titles, I may as certainly ascribe the loss of a snug situation for life, which that very day was given to another, as may Mr. Russell his acquisition of a ridiculous nickname for, I fear, the same period."

Oh, no, no," said Barry, "a nine days' wonder, nothing more; but observe, Sir, (to Abraham Bray, who had fallen into a momentary absence

of mind as Fitzgerald concluded,) observe, Sir, Lord Belford and the Foundling of — Confound that Dunmore! Mr. Russell, I mean, have drawn on one side to let the Duke of Lavermere and all his train pass by them. Here they come, for all the world like my Lord Mayor and the Court of Aldermen going up to St. James's with an address. Mark the ponderous magnificence of the ducal chariot and four, groaning with its weight of golden ornaments like the city state coach, whilst the postilions are sweating in liveries laced and tasselled with tons' weight of bullion, and his two outriders, also, in purple and gold, are even finer than the city marshals on Lord Mayor's Day."

Abraham Bray, without evincing the wished-for admiration of Barry's description, seemed absorbed in thought, and at length turning to him, said, with a countenance which betrayed the agitation of his mind—

"Sir, are you sure, quite sure that I am about to see the Duke of Lavermere?"

"Unless you shut your eyes, or turn your back, you must see him within three minutes," said Barry.

The hoofs of the horses, on which the duke's *avant-couriers* rode, by this time were pawing

the pavement close to the spot where Bray, all expectation, stood. He made a move behind Fitzgerald and the young Scot—they gave way to him simultaneously—he bowed his thanks, and as the chariot grazed the curbstone, on which he stood between the two friends, it was stopped, by preceding carriages, exactly opposite to Abraham Bray. There was thus only the breadth of the wheels between his straining eyes and the profile of the duke, on which they were intensely fixed, until his grace suddenly turning his full face towards Bray, he instantly staggered backwards, as if pierced by the glance, but the chariot at the same moment moving on, his extraordinary emotion did not excite the particular observation it otherwise would, and in a few moments he was able to master it, whatever was its nature.

He was further relieved by an exclamation of the young Caledonian—"And so that is the Duke of Lavemere?"

"Yes," said Barry, "that's the grandest, though not the greatest, duke in all Britain. His appearance to-day at Epsom will be deemed the most surprising phenomenon of the season; for he disdains to commingle with commoners even of the greatest opulence; and his contempt

for the 'lower orders' is so strong, that, if it were possible, he would have highways exclusively for the nobility, and is half an atheist, because there do not exist different atmospheres for beings so differently born into this world as the heirs of dukes and the sons of cotton-spinners."

"You caricature, Sir," said Abraham Bray, rather sternly.

"No, Sir, upon honour—do I, Fitz? His grace was an ostensible part of the cabinet in the late king's reign, but he has been heard to declare, that he considers the policy of our days downright radicalism, which has placed the sons of a Manchester weaver and of an Irish commoner over the heads of the whole aristocracy as Principal Secretaries of State!"

"Is the duke's own descent so very ancient and so very high?" asked Bray, with the design of screening his own knowledge of the family history, which his conscience made him imagine was more visible than he wished it should be."

"As ancient and as high as any in the kingdom, I believe," said Barry. "Those ladies who followed the chariot, in two barouches, are his grace's five daughters. The three eldest, it

is to be feared, are doomed to a state of single blessedness; and no wonder: confined in trammels of almost regal state, and as much secluded from society in London as in their ancient castle, what but nuns could they be? The difference of thirteen years between them and the two younger, may, however, be in favour of the latter, as their brother, Lord Belford, is suspected of a lurking rebellion against the duke's despotism and prejudices, which so ill suit the manners of this liberal age!—Indeed, should the marquis, who is a miserable invalid, die—”

“Was the marquis in the chariot with the duke?” interrupted Abraham Bray, who lost no syllable of the information he so much coveted to glean, and which was thus almost miraculously thrust upon him.

“Oh dear, no,” said Fitzgerald, taking up the question, “that was the amiable and excellent Mr. Collins, the duke's private secretary, or rather privy-counsellor—in fact, his right hand, his everything! He is a sort of lay Dr. Bartlett; but, his patron not being another Sir Charles Grandison, he has a plaguy deal harder task to perform than fell to the envied lot of that superfine baronet's chaplain. Some people

call the good Mr. Collins a hypocrite and a sycophant ; others a go-between ; and even those who speak the kindest of such a singular character, regard him as an easy sort of man, alias, a good-natured fool ! Whether he merits blame or praise for being every body's friend and apologist, and nobody's enemy—for a habit of pitying errors and overlooking injuries, instead of ridiculing the one and resenting the other, according to the practice in vogue—and, generally speaking, for an apparently servile submission to the duke's bad humours, prejudices, and sometimes unjust if not cruel decrees, is a question which ought not to be answered, until it be first ascertained how large a quantum of practical good, without one particle of self-interest, he has procured for hundreds of his fellow-creatures, exclusive of the duke's own family, by this skilful maintenance of his influence over the mind of the most prejudiced and the most proud of men, and which influence, if but for a moment suspected by the duke, his haughty spirit would shake off for ever ! I have heard the noble friend to whom I have before alluded, speak of Mr. Collins with enthusiastic praise !”

“ Here comes the marquis, in that close coach

and four," said Barry, "with his influential adviser also; but a very different practitioner to Mr. Collins."

"Poor fellow!" said Abraham Bray; "is that really the marquis? He appears in the very last stage of consumption!"

"And is so," replied Barry. "The old lady, who sits on the other side of him, is a distant relation of the late duchess: she is the childless and dowerless widow of a Scotch earl, and the duke has placed her at the head of the female department of his domestic establishment. She acts also sometimes as nurse to the marquis, as well as duenna to the ladies, his sisters."

"But who is the little ebony-faced fellow sitting with his back to the horses?" said Heron.

"That is Dr. Kent," said Barry—"originally nothing better than bill-distributer and boot-polisher to a celebrated quack doctor in Liverpool. The constitution of the Marquis of Caldore has been sacrificed on the altar of sensual pleasures. He was accompanied on his travels by a tutor, whose chief recommendation to the duke was a violent pamphlet which he wrote in imitation of 'Burke's Reflections

on the French Revolution,' containing some gross and unwarrantable abuse of the great Duke of Bedford, Mr. Fox, and other illustrious persons, whom he styled republicans and levellers. Anxious above all things to have his heir protected from the contamination of French principles, (as a liberal policy was then called,) the boy was committed to the guardianship of this clever and witty, but libertine anti-jacobin; who, though he succeeded to the duke's content in preventing his pupil from imbibing French political principles, or, indeed, any principles at all, could only accomplish that desirable object by allowing him a too liberal latitude in the indulgence of his passions; and he consequently returned, from a tour as extensive as the war permitted, with a practical knowledge of French life and manners, *selon l'ancienne régime*, and, of course, with such an injured constitution as very speedily betrayed the folly of the pupil and the baseness of the tutor. Alternate years of hope and despair have since gone by. Our Halfords, our Tierneys, our Clines, Abernethies, and Coopers, have at length retired, and the proprietor of a celebrated quack medicine, who had gained a fortune by empiricism, and lost it by

gambling in the stocks, is now happy to receive five hundred a-year as long as the shadow just passed continues to be considered alive. The old man on the other side of Dr. Kent, (as the quack impudently calls himself,) and whom, perhaps, you did not notice, is a French emigrant of the *abbé casté*, who was received into the duke's family, as French preceptor, in the early part of the French Revolution, and, being allied to one of the oldest branches of nobility, was so well entertained, and so much caressed by the duke, that, having no revenue to claim in his native country at the restoration of the Bourbons, he has remained a hanger-on in the family of Lavemere. He is strongly suspected of having used his influence on the weak mind of the marquis, to convert him privately to the Catholic religion, a Jesuitical scheme in which, however, he has met with considerable opposition from Lady Euphemia Honoria Maria Essington, his lordship's aforesaid nurse, who inclines a *leettle* to methodism, as well as from his quack medical attendant; who, when they are quite by themselves, indulges his drooping patient with rather more than *quantum sufficit* of the chief ingredient of his celebrated elixir, and, at the same time, administers his puny efforts at wit,

with the design of encouraging the wildest theories of atheism, which his anti-jacobin tutor permitted the weak mind of the marquis to imbibe at random, whilst he was so zealously and carefully protecting him against the soundest principles of political freedom."

"It appears, then," said Abraham Bray, anxious to keep these portrait-painters at work until they had finished the family sketch—"it appears, then, that Lord Belford may, without much presumption, be considered as presumptive heir to the Lavemere title and estates."

"Certainly," said Barry; "and lo! here he comes. Look at him. Has he not much more the air and countenance of a nobleman than the Marquis of Caldore. I should tell you they are the sons of two mothers. The first duchess was of an ancient family, the De Veres, of Hampshire, but maternally descended, with two or three removes, from the De Sylvas, a noble Portuguese family, established in the Brazils. The marquis and his three elder sisters owe their birth to this lady. About ten or eleven years intervened between the decease of the first duchess and his grace's marriage with the Lady Jane Lindsay, only daughter of the Duke of

Scotburgh, who was a very beautiful and accomplished woman, and the mother of Lord Belford and the Ladies Jane and Matilda."

During this extract, by rote, from a new edition of Burke's Peerage, Abraham Bray had once more obtruded between Fitzgerald and his friend, and as the phaeton passed, he fixed his scrutinizing eyes on the face of Mr. Russell, with the same intense observation, and nearly as much agitation, as he had gazed on the Duke of Lavemere.

"It is not a bad physiognomy," was all he said, and that to himself, as he intended, but loud enough to be caught by Barry.

"Whose physiognomy do you mean, Sir?" said he, "the lord's or the commoner's? I was speaking of Lord Belford."

"I was looking at the commoner. You know he is the wonder of the hour—the great Dunmore lion of the day; eh, Sir?" to Fitzgerald.

"Spare me on that subject, Sir, pray," said that real gentleman of the press, who now embraced the opportunity of again exculpating himself from the fault of Dunmore, whilst his quondam fellow-labourer, the sham gentleman of fashion, was studying the countenance of Abraham Bray. It exhibited just then an ex-

pression of strong yet tender feeling of that species of anxiety which, fluctuating betwixt hope and doubt, is cautious in listening too confidently to the encouragements of the former, and is yet more than half convinced of the folly of attending for a moment to the suggestions of the latter. His mind, at all events, appeared to be absorbed by meditations connected with the appearance of Russell, and he stood silently watching the departure of the vehicle until it conveyed him gradually out of sight.

CHAPTER IV.

A NOBLE FROLIC.

As the eyes of Percival Barry were thus rivetted on the countenance of the stranger, his mind was suddenly and irresistibly seized with a fit of decision, quite new to his nature. Thus thought Barry:—"There is most certainly some link of connection between this stranger and the Foundling of Fortune! Something also the old fellow has to do with the Duke of Lavemere! He must be a man of great importance, either from wealth, or power of some sort! If not a foreigner, he has been many, many years abroad! Only two days in England—not four hours in London! No creature but

myself has spoken to him ! Seems to be much taken with me ! Is ignorant of modern London as a child from school ! Why, Percival Barry, I tell you, man, here is a tide, which taken at the flood may lead to fortune ! Yes, it shall be so, I am resolved ; I'll seize the golden oar ! From this very moment I'll turn my back on all other human creatures, relinquish every other pursuit, to follow and to study only him. Lady Blushington's affairs must be postponed, if not abandoned. Lord Chesterfield's Speech on the Liberation of Greece must wait my revise a few days longer, at all events, in spite of Ridgway's wrath ! and Lady Sarah Jackson may run after Professor Brande herself, for his corrections of her pet book of ' Chemistry made easy, or the Infant's Laboratory ! ' Yes, it shall be so—Foster, thou great essayist, thou reasonest well !—there is not, and there cannot be, a state of happiness in man's mind, without that firm decision which now is mine ! For now I swear, no creature or thing, whosoever or whatsoever, shall turn me from my purpose, or prevent me from keeping my prize in view, at least till I have thoroughly overhauled it ! I'll follow the old boy like his shadow ; and never from this moment will I lose sight of him until I obtain

some clue to guide my steps to fortune!" Such was the silent soliloquy of a minute! and thus did Percival Barry, in all the pride and strength of a successful manœuvrer, resolve.

O! short-sighted mortals! how silly would appear many of the grandest projects for futurity, if the overwhelming though unseen obstacle, which mocks thy proud resolves, could be discerned, whilst waiting only the fleeting passage of days, perhaps of hours, ere it bursts with mockery and scorn upon astonished ignorance! Poor Barry's golden dream was not allowed even the duration of a minute! for, as he thus soliloquised, with his eyes, as we have said, closely rivetted upon the object of his thoughts and speculations, there drew up, unperceived by him, to the spot where he was standing, the celebrated new whimsey carriage of Lord Landorville, which was exactly the *fac simile* of a mail-coach. The noble coachman was one of Barry's wealthiest dupes, though his lordship flattered himself with the softer title of a patron. Lord Landorville was indeed a singular compound of good and bad, both in his tastes and principles. His ruling passion was what Pope styled "love of fame," but which Frederick Reynolds has dramatised in our days as "notoriety."

He was the victim of applause, the sport of flattery. Every new scheme that was well puffed, and whose subscribers were well advertised, was sure of Lord Landorville as a patron or a director ; and his lordship was equally at home among the big swells of the Fancy at Tom Cribb's, and the literati at the Albion or the Traveller's Clubs. He could spout gracefully and correctly the French, Italian, Spanish, Greek, and Latin poets ; and with equal accuracy, and perhaps more perfect idiom, he could converse in their own slang with the most knowing kiddies of the fancy, having the whole dictionary of Pierce Egan at his fingers' ends ; and being prime bang-up in all the knowledge that is to be gleaned from " Life in London ! " His newest gratification was the applause of every body for his admirable performances in the character of a mail-coachman, in which he was, however, greatly assisted by a certain *roué*, who dressed the part of guard with the nicest precision of costume, and above all, played most astonishingly well on the key-bugle ! So perfect was the acting of these amateur performers, that they have repeatedly taken up passengers on the Hammersmith road, and carried them to Salt Hill ere the hoax was discovered. These were

common tricks of deception; but to-day the evil genius of Barry prompted the noble driver to the performance of a new practical joke. His quick eye had discovered, in spite of his cloak and hat, the long nose of the "Poet," as his lordship had nicknamed the person he had chosen to patronize, and in a moment he resolved to carry him off by force to Epsom. Besides, the black-leg guard, who sat behind the Landorville Mail, contrary to all orders, this day carried four outsides on the roof—a sporting colonel, a retired prize-fighter, a rich Jew partner in a fashionable hell, and a West-Indian minor, raw as his own sugars! Concealed very snug inside, to avoid the recognition of their hundred cousins, sat two truant Cantabs, each of whose duped papas had received, by that day's post, most dutiful epistles from Christ Church, Cambridge, filled with the wonders they were doing in the dry study of the mathematics.

Now so soon as Lord Landorville had, as he expressed it, "stagged the poet," he made a sign for silence to the guard and outside passengers, and pulled up. He then prepared the tickler in his hand, and taking aim, as if about to perform the feat of "cutting a fly's eye out," he actually brought the end of his whip-cord in contact with the tip of

the poet's nose, with the skilful precision of a Russian knoutsman.

"I'll follow the old boy like his shadow ; and never from this moment will I lose sight of him until—"

Thus far Barry had soliloquized, at that very division of the second of time, when the tingling surprise occasioned him to start from his reverie, with the exclamation of—

"Holloa ! What's that ?"

The answer was astounding—a flourish of the key-bugle, shouts of laughter from the coachman, guard, and passengers of the Landorville Mail, and merrier and still louder roars of laughter from the surrounding populace.

Ere either Abraham Bray or Barry himself could recover from their astonishment at such a stage, such a scene, and such actors, their ears were assailed with vociferations from six or seven voices at once, with sounds something like the following:

"Holloa, poet ! What's the fancy now ?"

"Yoix ! yoix ! yoix, there ! Barry, you spooney, you, what are you after ?"

"Come out, come out, you varmint."

"Unkennel, you sly fox, unkennel."

"Holloa, there ! I say, York, you're wanted."

"Come along, my pretty page, in your dancing pumps."

Much of this jargon was wholly unintelligible to Mr. Bray; but nothing could be more ludicrous than the scene that followed. In an instant the Christ Church lads were out of the mail, and joining their fellow-passengers in making capture of the poet, whose face was crimsoned with shame and vexation, but who was, for the first minute or two, too much overpowered by surprise, to make any attempts at remonstrance or resistance; and when he did, six to one rendered all his entreaties and his struggles vain, and he became as helpless in the hands of his captors as Sancho Panza, when tossed in a blanket.

"I've been up all night: my servant will wait with my cab all day in the street. Let me speak to you, Lord Landorville. Dear colonel, allow me to say one word to my friend. Nay, by G—d, it's too bad. It's no joke. I—I—I—"

These and other petitions and remonstrances were all fruitless; the pathetic or the furious were equally unavailing with these grown boys, bent on their frolic, and true to their leader, who kept calling out—

"Box him up, box him up; trundle him in."

At length Barry perceiving escape to be im-

possible, resolved to make the best he could of the joke, and with his feet on the steps, and forcing a laugh, he raised his voice, in an effort to make Bray hear his—

“ Good bye, Sir. You see I am another Johnny Gilpin, going further than I intended ; but we shall soon meet again.”

The steps were up—the door was closed—the bugle sounded—the whip cracked—the four bloods gallopped—and the crowd huzzaed.

The whole of this harlequinade was acted in less than three minutes ; and so completely astonished was Mr. Bray, that as many minutes more had elapsed ere he was sufficiently recovered from his surprise to ask Mr. Fitzgerald, who seemed to enjoy the joke as heartily as the rest of the spectators, if he knew what it all meant.

“ A mere frolic, a sudden whim of the noble four-in-hand Lord Landorville, who feeds and pays his toad-eaters so handsomely, and is in the main so good-natured to them, that they scruple not to submit to all the indignities usually inflicted on Pantaloons, whenever it is his lordship’s pleasure to play Harlequin.”

“ Lord ! Lordship !” exclaimed the astonished Bray. “ Do you say seriously, Sir, that the

young fellow who drove—that the coachman I have just seen is a peer of the realm?”

To the increased amazement of his auditor, Fitzgerald then unfolded the character of the Earl of Landorville and some of his companions, and finished the sketch by repeating—

“ Thus far evidently it is the mere whim of a madcap; but what further uses some of the set may make of their captive, when they have put wine into the heads and cards into the hands of the juveniles of the party, is not so readily answered. But it is a perilous temptation, Sir, to a man of high fashion and no fortune, when he is compelled to see rooks in the very act of plucking pigeons, and finds himself called upon to decide, in a moment, whether he will save the victims, or share the spoil. Three of the unsuspecting Landorville’s present associates are, to my knowledge, as desperate and crafty *legs* as ever entered Crockford’s.”

“ I understand you, Sir,” said Bray; “ and pray is your friend—is this Mr. What’s-his-name—I mean—that person—”

Fitzgerald stared at Bray, and Bray stared in return, at Fitzgerald, until at length the latter spoke his wonder.

“ My friend, Sir, why so emphatically my

friend, when Mr. Barry is your own very particular friend?"

"The merely accidental acquaintance of the hour," said Mr. Bray, and then proceeded to describe all that occurred between himself and Barry.

"Incorrigible liar!" exclaimed Fitzgerald, in an half-smothered tone of indignation. Then addressing Mr. Bray, "He drew me aside, Sir, I assure you, to whisper in my ear that you were his very particular friend, indeed a distant relation, who had just arrived in England after a residence of many years at Grand Cairo; that you were immensely rich, and that he was not without hopes of becoming your heir. But that you were a great oddity, and required much humouring; that you had expressed a wish to see the shew, and being unwilling to refuse accompanying you, he assured me he stood there, dressed as he was, in as much horror of being seen as if he were exposed upon the pillory; and concluded by imploring me to aid him, not only in hiding himself from the passing groups of characters, but in describing them to you."

"An impudent farrago of falsehoods! Why Fernandez Pinto must indeed have been a fool to this liar of the first magnitude! So I am a

great oddity from Grand Cairo, who require much humouring, eh? and have the honour of being related to this man of high fashion without fortune, eh? Well, I hope the puppy will not very soon cross my path again, or he may feel the great toe of the man from Grand Cairo. And yet let me recollect myself, I owe the fellow some gratitude for this scene, which I shall never forget, and still more, jackanapes as he is himself, he has, however unintentionally, been the means of bringing me acquainted with talent and merit that have won my admiration, and raised the character of a liberal and honest agent, a real gentleman of the press, to its justly high rank in my estimation. Yes, Sir, perfect strangers as you and I were to each other half an hour ago, your zealous endeavour to serve your noble friend in the affair of Mr. Russell, and your proper feeling on that occasion, have created a stronger and more lasting interest for you in an old man's heart than the present opportunity permits him to explain."

This last speech of Mr. Bray was uttered with a warmth that surprised, at the same time that it gratified Fitzgerald. He felt a little at a loss to reply, and was not sorry to be relieved by his friend Heron's interruption.

That young man had just looked at his watch, and the moment Mr. Bray paused, he observed to Fitzgerald—

“ It is much later than I thought. I fear I shall lose ‘Scarlett’s Opening.’ I’ll push on—remember to call for the bones at Sams’s—you’ll come to me, but I would not miss to-day’s grand set-to for the world,” and so saying, away skipped the young reporter across the Green Park towards Westminster Hall, without waiting to hear the reply of Fitzgerald to Abraham Bray.

By this time the cavalcade was reduced to a few straggling carriages; the crowd of spectators had gradually diminished, and Fitzgerald having to call at Sams’s in St. James’s-street, moved instinctively towards the east, and Bray’s destination being the White Horse Cellar, they walked side by side down Piccadilly, by sort of tacit agreement. Alluding to the words of Heron, Bray inquired, “What is the nature of the grand set-to your young friend is so anxious about, Sir—a boxing match, or a —”

“It is a trial of skill, but not pugilistic,” said Fitzgerald, with a smile. “That young man, Sir, is working his way, with true Caledonian industry and perseverance, to the English bar. He reads hard at home, and works hard occasion

ally at a special pleader's; and as the few Scotch acres he inherits are not more than sufficiently productive to support a mother, three sisters, a younger brother, and an aged grandmother, Heron feels no degradation in drawing stipendiary supplies from Dunmore as a law-reporter to his paper, instead of lessening the comforts of their humble but happy home."

"So far from that being a disgrace to him, it is greatly, greatly to his honour," said Bray.

"And not less to his advantage," replied Fitzgerald. "I speak from experience, when I say that Heron will imbibe more useful law to-day from the living lips of such legal oracles as Copley and Scarlett, than he will dig out of all the book cemeteries of dead lawyers' opinions to be found in the chambers of either Chitty, or Tidd, or Brodie. Nor is that all; for the reporter not only, without bias for plaintiff or defendant, hears both sides—not only obtains a *viva voce* exposition of the laws and constitution of his country from the opposite arguments of the most ingenious pleaders of the day, balanced by the proverbial justice of an English judge, but he has the benefit of being habitually accustomed, by contradictory witnesses, to seeing two sides of the same scenes of human life and man-

ners, and of viewing, as it were, with his own eyes, impartially, the various and conflicting operations of the human passions in all those different shades to which the several states, degrees, characters, and circumstances of the human being in society subject him. With these inestimable advantages over the mere student of the pleader's closet, or the attorney's office, it is not to be wondered at, that among the most able lawyers, as well as the most eloquent orators of the present day, are to be found certain popular barristers, who owe the success of their career to a commencement similar to Heron's."

"I feel, Sir, the full force of all those pertinent observations, which it has been my good fortune to hear fall from your lips. It is impossible you can know the bias of an old man's mind, you never saw or heard of before the present hour; but, believe me, if you had possessed the knowledge of my heart, and had been disposed to win my warmest approbation, I do not think you would have uttered a sentiment or an opinion in a different spirit to that which, according to my judgment, reflects upon you so much honour."

Fitzgerald smiled and bowed.

“I do not say this entirely without a motive,” continued Bray. “We are drawing very nigh my hotel. Stranger, as I am to you, Mr. Fitzgerald, I can not wonder if you refuse me the favour I am about to ask—which is, the opportunity of making ourselves better acquainted with each other. An old fellow, like myself, who can give no other address than the White Horse Cellar, Piccadilly, as his domicile, ought not to be, and will not be, offended if his overtures are treated with shyness; and yet I shall be sorry—extremely sorry—if a gentleman so honourably connected with the public press, and whose sentiments appear so consonant with my own on topics of high importance, denies me all chance of improving this accidental meeting into a better acquaintance. Our time is short, and I must be as brief. It therefore is necessary to say, what, under different circumstances, would be ostentatious egotism—that although I have not, at this moment, decided where to fix my home for the next four-and-twenty hours, I have in my pocket-book letters that would domiciliate me instantly, either at the house of Mr. Gregory, the late guardian of Mr. Russell, or at the residence of the Duke of Lavemere, in Whitehall. On the strength of banking recommendations,

I think I might choose also between the hospitalities of Mr. Baring, Messrs. Hammersley, or the great Jew of London. But I shall pause; and all I venture to solicit, Mr. Fitzgerald, for the present, is, permission to wait upon you as soon as I am able to leave my card. At this moment, I can only tell you my name is Abraham Bray."

Fitzgerald was another proof, if one were wanted, that there are no general rules without an exception. Hibernian as he was in blood, both by father and mother, and warm-hearted as the most benevolent and generous among the sons of Erin, he was modest. As the name of the "great and good man," Mr. Gregory, the lofty Duke of Lavemere, the rich Baring, and Hammersleys, and the King of the Jews, rung in his ears, his cheeks were tinged with a glowing crimson hue, and his tongue a little faltered at reply.

"You mention high and great names indeed, Sir, in connection with that of Mr. Abraham Bray, which I shall not fail to remember with the gratitude due for the honour proposed to me. I cannot for an instant doubt the sincerity of your kind expressions, Sir, but fear I shall suffer greatly by not dying to your notice,

now at once, whilst in the height of my fame ! If, however, you should persist in the desire of prolonging the existence of an acquaintance with so humble an individual, a letter to this address (giving a card) will find Walter Fitzgerald. My 'home' is with my father and mother, at Brompton. The former has for some years been bed-ridden with palsy, and my mother is very aged and almost blind. They claim all the time of an only sister ; I therefore do not make appointments under so melancholy a roof. My engagements, also, carry me every day into the Strand, and I have all my letters addressed to the Turk's Head Coffee House, opposite Catherine Street, and there, for the present, I see my friends."

They had now reached the White Horse Cellar ; and as Mr. Bray received the card from Fitzgerald, he shook him cordially by the hand, and said—

" At the Turk's Head Coffee House I shall certainly, then, do myself the pleasure to call as early as I am able ; and in the event of not seeing you there, Sir, request and earnestly hope that you will honour me with a speedy return of my call."

They then bowed to each other ; Mr. Bray ascended the steps of the hotel, and Fitzgerald, as he bent his way to Sams's, in St. James's Street, in fulfilment of his promise to his friend, said to himself—

“ What an odd adventure ! Little did Percival Barry dream, when he was pointing out this singular old gentleman to my notice, that he himself was about to be so abruptly and ludicrously carried off to Epsom ; leaving me to expound the marvel of his disappearance to this ‘ very particular friend, just arrived from Grand Cairo,’ whom neither he nor I ever saw before, and, probably, may never see again !”

CHAPTER V.

AN ANTI-LIBERAL.

It was in compliance with the insane whim of the spoiled child of a doating father, that the pride of the Duke of Lavemere had yielded to the unaccountably strong desire of the Marquis of Caldore, and “ wrung from him his slow leave” to honour the Epsom race course with the presence of the Lavemere family. The consequence of this indulgence was fatal to his favourite. The very same night all the symptoms of his complicated disorders were changed for the worse : and the Duke, in defiance of Dr.

Kent, persisted in calling in Sir Henry Halford and other real physicians to a consultation. Their advice was instant removal from the atmosphere of London ; and, after various pros and cons, Hastings was recommended as the spot best suited the constitution of the noble invalid. This was a better pill for the Duke ; his affection for his favourite forbade their separation, yet his love of pomp and pride of rank ill suited with the plan of a removal of his family to a watering place. But there was no alternative, and therefore all due preparation having been made, on the Thursday following the extraordinary appearance of the Lavemere family at Epsom races, exactly as the clock at the Horse Guards sounded the hour of noon, four superb travelling carriages and four, with a suitable retinue of servants, drove up in waiting at Lavemere House, Whitehall.

The length and splendour of this travelling train attracted the attention, and arrested the footsteps of one enquiring passenger after another, until a crowd collected which filled a considerable space of the large area before that noble mansion. The spirit of curiosity, at all times peculiarly active in the breasts of the English people, and which

had for some minutes been displayed in questions of "Whose house is this?—who lives here?" now became more and more visible in the countenances of the increasing throng, who fixed their eyes upon the yet unopened portals, with the same impatient expectation that novices on their first visit to a theatre watch for the rising of the green curtain. At length the massive doors turned inwards, and presented a scene of apparent bustle and confusion, such as is not unusual in the halls of great men's winter mansions at the moment of their flight into the country for the summer season. Although plate-chests, trunks of clothes and linen, and other heavy baggage had been sent on one day's march before, under the command of the house steward and the chief butler, there yet remained a vast collection of light articles which were mustered in the hall under the surveillance of ladies' maids and valets, who were now seen regulating the rapid motions of books, bandboxes, and dressing-cases, work-bags, and umbrellas, fishing-rods, fur-caps, and marshal cloaks, maps, mantons, music-books, monkies, and macaws, paroquets, pet-dogs, pet-birds, pet-plants, pistols, parasols, portfolios, and pocket telescopes, exhibiting to the eyes of lookers-on the chaos

of a scene of uproar in a pantomime ; whilst in reality such was the system of order and arrangement in every department of this princely household, that in a few minutes all these inferior personages, with the whole of these miscellaneous articles committed to their charge, were distributed agreeably to previous orders in and behind the carriages, according to their several stations, and left the spacious vestibule as clear and as silent as the stage at the Opera when the chorusses or the figurantes have just retreated, and the spectators are breathless with expectation for the appearance of a *prima donna*, or the *entrée* of the " first dancer in the world."

Order was his grace of Lavemere's talismanic word. It will scarcely be believed by those whose notions of the manners of the Great, have been acquired from models of nobility formed in the modern school of " self-indulgence," which so easily dispenses with all etiquette, and every ceremony " that gives trouble," it will to such seem almost impossible that this rich, independent, and powerful Duke should voluntarily encumber himself with the gorgeous trammels of almost regal pomp, and glory in every opportunity of displaying them.

The Duke of Lavemere, on the other hand, had not daily experience convinced him of the fact, would have conceived it to be impossible that (with very few exceptions) the hereditary lords of the soil had become so generally negligent of every external symbol of nobility, that, saving the coronet on his carriage, there remains no one visible mark of distinction to point out to the people which is the draper, and which is the duke. Whether any, and what degree of evil has resulted, or may hereafter arise from that universal devotion to "ease and comfort," and the consequent abandonment of "state and ceremony," which so remarkably distinguish the present race of our nobility from their ancestors, are questions not immediately requiring our decision; and we therefore leave this discussion to the talents and sophisms of the Jeffreys, the Lockharts, the Norths, the Southes, the Bentham, and other magnates of the Quarterly, and Monthly periodicals, when they take the present work for their text! But be that inquiry decided as it may, the Duke of Lavemere at least is guiltless of any of the evils, moral or political, present or remote, that may by possibility be ascribed to the relinquishment of pomp and ceremony by the higher orders in general, and the indolent

disuse of those badges and barriers, which formerly distinguished and separated the aristocracy from the common mass of the people !

The principles by which his grace was actuated in the government of all who were subject to his power, were despotic in the extreme ; and, though not deficient in benevolence, if permitted to do good according to his own supreme will and pleasure, the rigid discipline of his household, his pertinacious exaction of the most ceremonious homage on the most trivial occasions, not only from his menials, but the gentlemen of his establishment, and even his own children, caused him to be regarded by all around him with sentiments much nearer allied to fear than love : for the strictness of his regulations on the minutest points of subordination in his household, was only surpassed by the unrelenting severity with which he enforced observance.

On the present occasion, which was merely a removal of the ducal family to a temporary residence at Hastings, he had caused to be written, from his own dictation, the order of precedence of the carriages ; and the names of every member of the family who, according to their priority of rank, were to take

their respective places in them ; pointing out even the precise station which the lowest domestic was to occupy !

This important document, as well as all other written ordinances of the Duke, was consigned to the custody of the Honourable Mr. Collins, his grace's private secretary, by title, but whose duties were various and manifold. Indeed, considering his patron assumed almost regal state, we may denominate this secretary his Lord High Chancellor ; for to Mr. Collins were made all appeals in matters of doubtful legislation by the household ; and to him also were addressed, as keeper of the Duke's conscience, all pleas and petitions of every description. And certainly never had monarch a more faithful and discreet, or subjects a more humane and liberal minister, to mediate between the governed and the governor.

The programme of the order of procession during the present journey had been explained to all parties concerned the preceding evening, and Mr. Collins was now standing in one of the balconies of the library, which looked out upon the street, and comparing the actual order of the cavalcade with the written instructions he held in his hand ; an act of his duty which the

amiable man performed with as much apparent gravity, though not anxiety, as if he had been the Lord High Chamberlain, marshalling the procession at a coronation. Satisfied that all was quite correct, he turned round to the Duke himself (that great personage being then employed in affixing his signature to some letters written by his secretary), and announced to his grace that all was in "perfect order." For a moment his grace stepped to the window, and saw with high satisfaction the crowd of people, whom the uncommon magnificence of such an equipage and retinue had collected and kept together; and was gratified by the repetition of his title, in reply to continued inquiries—"Who lives here?"—"Whose carriages are these?"

In most remarkable contrast with this princely parade, the Duke's eye happened at that moment to rest upon the well-known modest vehicle of one of the princes of the blood royal, heir-presumptive to the throne, which was drawn up in waiting on the opposite side of Whitehall. It was a plain one-horse chaise, commonly called a buggy, in which, perfectly at his ease, lolled a groom in an undress livery, toying with the reins and whip until the arrival of his royal

master ; when off whirled the unostentatious vehicle, and instantly mingled without distinction among numerous others of a similar description, which are seen constantly trundling through the streets of the metropolis.

“ There—see there Mr. Collins”—exclaimed his grace ; “ There goes Royalty in a buggy ! Good Heavens ! is it not surprising, Sir, that love of ease should so infatuate the present generation ? Is it not alarming, Sir ? How long can we rationally calculate the duration of the ‘ present order of things,’ when we behold princes so near the throne, whose every visible act ought to beam majesty in the eyes of the common people, thus exhibiting themselves to the public gaze, in a dress and with an equipage not to be distinguished from that of a visiting apothecary ? ”

This was an old theme ; and the conciliating Mr. Collins, knowing the spirit in which he was expected to reply, could only palliate what he dared not defend.

“ With submission to your grace, I am inclined to think less seriously of the matter. I grant that his Royal Highness certainly does not travel *en prince* ; but then, few among the street passengers recognise him in his *incognito* ;

and the 'incognito,' considering his close attention to his official duties, may be requisite, on the score of ease and comfort, though certainly liable to objection on other accounts."

A frown on the brow of his patron shewed to Mr. Collins that he had gone a step too far.

" 'Incognito,' ease and comfort !" exclaimed the duke. "What nonsense a man must sometimes talk, who will be everybody's apologist. The Commander-in-Chief, and a Prince of the Blood *incog.* at the Horse Guards ! I must beg leave to tell you, Sir, this ease and comfort, and 'incognito,' is a most mischievous charm, hatched, like many others of a similar description, by the evil genius of revolution, and fostered by the spirit of self-indulgence, to forward the plots of republicans and levellers. Why, Sir,—I—some degrees lower in rank as I am—a duke it's true, but without consanguinity to the reigning dynasty, and therefore so much less responsible—yet I should feel the remorse and shame of a deserter, if, for the sake of 'ease and comfort,' I, the Duke of Lavemere, were to shrink from encountering the fatigues or the expences of my proper state and dignity, to which Divine Providence has been pleased to call me ! Born to the rank of duke, I cannot

bring myself to think that I have a right, otherwise than as a duke, to appropriate the revenues of those lands, which I inherit from my ducal ancestors. Away then with your plebeian jargon of 'ease and indulgence,' of 'snug and comfortable!' unless, indeed, the empire has already arrived at that crisis of its decline and fall, that no efforts of public virtue can make sufficient stand against fictitious wealth, to rescue the order of nobility from the usurious rapacity of anti-English money-jobbers, and the levelling schemes of political economists; unless, in fact, the coward cry of '*saue qui peut*,' be already sounded, and it be, as men say, that a pound sterling must be saved by the sacrifice of all pretensions to character, and the abandonment of all principle and feeling. If so—why then, and in that case, good Collins, let us, in the spirit of the age, at once dismiss this train of carriages, and discharge all these attendants, and, by all means, let the *incognito* Duke of Lavemere and his family take places 'snug and comfortable,' packed inside or out, in the cheapest opposition stage to Hastings."

The meek secretary saw the necessity of sounding a retreat; and perceiving that the Duke, according to his custom, was resolved to

keep the carriages to parade half an hour in waiting at the door, thus apologized :—

“Nay, pardon me, your Grace; you push my meaning much too far. Nobody can be more sensible than I am of the absolute necessity of what may be termed the outward and visible signs of the social orders; for without distinctive lines of rank, and marked boundaries of the respective classes, no wholesome state of society can long subsist. There has been, I must confess, something too much of the “Hail fellow, well met,” in the appearance as well as the conduct of too many of the nobility. But I trust that ‘fool’s holiday’ is now over—and am inclined to believe that the once dreaded experiments of equality, *à la Française*, would not now delude the most ignorant Englishman.”

“Much of the danger is unquestionably passed away with the novelty of the levelling system,” said the Duke: “but what would have been the position of this country, Sir, at the present moment, if the examples of certain ‘snug and comfortable’ dukes, and other ‘free and easy’ fraternizing peers, had been more generally followed, or, rather, if the career of such noble *sans-culottes* had been less resolutely, less energetically opposed? When shoe-strings

and cropped hair were adopted by dukes from the costume of their stable-boys, had there not been some among us, Mr. Collins, who still retained enough of common sense to discern something beyond the ridiculous in the lunatic abandonment of the visible distinctions of rank, I confidently affirm, Sir, that the levelling fashions of those times would have proceeded from absurdity to absurdity, until the lowest menials of the stable and the kitchen would have been called to the fraternal embrace, and permitted to seat themselves at our elbows; if, indeed, tutored and encouraged so far, they would have been satisfied with only snugly and comfortably sharing our fortunes! But the salutary check which, at the first moment of danger, I myself gave, and excited others to give, to the progress of this anti-social disorder, I deem the chief glory of my life!" Here the duke's bosom actually swelled with pride: he threw back his head, and paced the room with a triumphant air, now fingering with his right hand the rich lace frill which, with a bag to his powdered wig, and ample ruffles at his wrists, always made part of his dress; and now thrusting his left hand, with the air of a tragedian of the old school, into the pocket of his black satin inex-

pressibles ! Then, after a pause, in a more serious and pompous tone, he resumed :—
“ And mark me, Sir, though others may be deluded by the present more slow but not less certain innovations on the privileges and distinctions of the higher classes, I can discover the same republican spirit now in full force under all the finely-specious and imposing pretexts of universal education, general diffusion of useful knowledge, and abolition of all religious tests ; in a word, I see it in that overstrained and unnatural liberality which finds nothing to blame in the avowed atheist, nor any thing to apprehend from the open traitor. I see clearly enough the revolutionary spirit of the modern disciples of the old jacobins still agitating the public mind with the same ulterior views as their masters, though disguised in a vast variety of new shapes, half-concealed by the tinsel draperies of a spurious philanthropy, or the masks of self-called saints. Let the leaden-eyed sleepers at the helm of the state dream on much longer, and mark me, Sir, they will awake too late ! Bats, owls that they are to be blind to the ceaseless efforts of democracy now as much as ever in vigorous operation, unsettling, disquieting, and perplexing the visionary

and enthusiastic, and still further inflaming the discontented and seditious." Again the duke paused; he had suffered himself to be hurried away, at an unsuitable moment, by the re-kindling of his old feelings, as an alarmist, engendered, at the period of the French Revolution by the eloquence of Pitt, Burke, and Windham, in a mind peculiarly adapted to receive and nourish such terrors.

After the silence of a minute, he muttered again, "And have I a son among the 'visionary,' 'enthusiastic,' 'discontented,' 'seditious?'" The political conduct and connections of Lord Belford just then painfully recurred to him. He sighed deeply, but rallying his energies in the next instant, he exclaimed, "Mr. Collins, attend to me, Sir—I have been led, from a passing observation on the Royal Duke, to an expression of feelings I by no means premeditated, but since I have been thus brought unintentionally so very near a subject on which I did intend, at a fit opportunity, to speak to you once, and only once more, it shall be now. That subject is Lord Belford. You are aware, Mr. Collins, that I granted that young man a fortnight to make up his mind upon those points respecting which we were at issue. He has

decided—yes, Sir, and has dared to decide against my advice and in opposition to my commands. Now, Sir, you have known the Duke of Lavemere long enough, and intimately enough, to be convinced that he will not be trifled with. Hear me then—nobody can be more willing than I am to give you, Mr. Collins, the fullest credit for good motives in every act of your life; but once for all, and from this moment, Sir, be it understood between you and me, as an unqualified condition of our continued friendship, (if that object be worth any sacrifice on your part,) be it understood, I repeat, that I am never to be annoyed by you, on any plea or pretence whatever, with the mention of the name of that blighted and cast-off branch of the Lavemere family. I do not yet pronounce a father's curse upon him, for I have yet charity enough to suppose it possible, just barely possible, that the course which he thus so obstinately pursues in defiance of my remonstrance, may, I say, by some unaccountable fatuity, may, as he asserts, appear to him, and to some others of his club of liberals, consistent with what he or they are pleased to call their reason and their public duty, though that line of conduct be in evident contradiction to common

sense, and to all the universally received maxims of prudence among mankind in all ages of the world. But admitting, for an instant, that possibility, and giving him all the latitude and benefit of that admission, it alters not one iota the position he chuses to take towards me, since, be his motive what it may, his pertinacity in publicly opposing my declared will, and his open adherence to political connections, the inveterate opponents of his father's policy, proclaim him the disobedient son. Yes, Sir, I and my counsels are scorned, and it is indifferent to me, whether men call him a madman or a fool, a patriot or a philosopher, to me he is dead—yes, I repeat, to me, as a son, he is dead. Let his name then be mentioned no more in my hearing by any who deem my friendship worth preserving.”

During this speech, (a sample of those pompous orations, of which Mr. Collins was often compelled to be an auditor) that excellent man (perfectly master of all the keys which made the discord or the harmony of mind of the orator) remained passively silent: he was too good a tactician not to feel, that by prolonging the subject at the moment, he should certainly increase the discord, and therefore anxiously watched an opportunity to strike a different

chord. But so completely royal was the dignity assumed by this grand duke, that no one ever presumed to lead to a new topic of discourse when admitted to the honour of a conversation, if that sort of dialogue may so be called, where the questions are all on one side, and only answers on the other.

The duke, as he finished his speech, turned on his heel, and walking to the table, took up one of the letters he had been signing, and said, "Here, again, is another and older fool, but this letter, I hope, will relieve me from the persecutions of this advocate of the liberals. Do me the favour, Sir, to read it, and with a pen in your hand—I am anxious it should be minutely correct, even to the position of a comma; for really it is quite impossible to say what the combined vanity and folly of liberal statesmen, in this printing and publishing age, may not send for insertion in the public newspapers. After seeing on the book-stalls, price three shillings and sixpence, the actual Correspondence of the Earls Moira and Grey, Marquis Wellesley and Mister George Canning, on the abortive attempt to bring in 'the Early Friends' at 'the New Era,' exposing the trashy bullying about the royal household to the vulgar

eyes of a reading rabble, I say after such a specimen of liberality to their confiding prince, God knows what next may be put in print for the 'Diffusion of Knowledge among the People.' Read carefully therefore, Sir, even as if you were a gentleman of the press, and correcting manuscript for the public eye."

Mr. Collins read, and with the pen in his hand, but knew his patron's self-conceit too well to find a single fault, or offer one suggestion or improvement."

"MY DEAR LORD NORTHCOTE,

"Having, as I hoped, convinced you of the utter impossibility of any nearer approximation, at least on my part, of our widely-different opinions on the subject, which has involved us in so voluminous and fruitless a correspondence, I candidly confess I was equally sorry and surprised to receive your Lordship's letter of yesterday's date. A sincere friendship, of so long standing, and the high veneration I must ever feel for a character, the model of perfection in all the duties of private life, will not permit me to suffer any communication from your Lordship to remain unacknowledged. But, my dear Lord, with this bare acknowledgment of your

letter, and my thanks for the motives of your persevering, labour-in-vain, endeavours to make the nauseous cup of liberalism palatable to my taste, you must be satisfied. I have neither time, nor, in truth, inclination, to go over our old arguments again; and really as to what your Lordship intimates about some new view of the important subject, which Mister George Canning's speech, published as corrected by himself, has exhibited so clearly to the optics of yourself and your new friends, I see it not. The new light is all darkness to poor dull Lave-mere. I suppose my prejudices, (as the young gentlemen just transferred from the school forms of Harrow or Eton to the senatorial benches of St. Stephen's, call all experience and every body's opinion, save and except their own,) these prejudices, I suppose, prevent me from beholding the least essential ultimate difference between the levelling results of that frittering away of the influence and privileges of the higher classes (I must not say the aristocracy), which liberalism and political economy are now gradually operating in Britain, and that tremendous blow to the established and social system of Europe, the decretal annihilation of the orders of nobility and clergy in France, by the will of the sovereign

people, of which universal specific for all political evils your liberalism is clearly a copy. But why do I prolong this letter? You, my dear Lord, from motives which I presume not to arraign, and which, I am sure, spring from the purest and most honourable feelings, have resolved (as I understand you) upon a compromise and surrender of your personal inclinations and former convictions, to what you term the expediency of the moment. Most certainly you are free to act in this matter as your own will decides; only allow me, also, my lord, the same privilege. To me, then, on the contrary, it seems highly expedient, that whatever political influence I command be marshalled in opposition to the ministry of which you have actually become a member: not however as you hint, merely because the seals of both the Home and Foreign departments are in the hands of commoners, of commoners, too, descended from Heaven knows whom, and whose ancestral estates are to be looked for, Heaven knows where; though these are sad signs of the times! No, my lord, for if the whole crop of political mushrooms now in favour were thrown back on their native dunghills tomorrow, and their places supplied by privy counsellors, boasting the most noble and ancient blood

in the peerage, yet never shall the support of the Duke of Lavemere be given to any cabinet, however formed, pursuing a timid, truckling, mean, and trafficking system of policy, which, by its conciliating, compromising, and neutralising spirit, cannot fail to perplex, confound, and discourage all the loyal adherents to church and state, the supporters of the monarchical and hierarchal parts of our venerable constitution; whilst it emboldens and stimulates the hostile attacks of atheistical republicans and levellers, under all their various new-fangled titles of liberals, philanthropists, philosophers, and political economists.

“ Such, after the most mature deliberation, being my firm unalterable resolve, and your lordship being now unhappily an integral part of that cabinet, to which I thus avow an open and inflexible hostility, it necessarily follows, that, as long as this lamented connection exists, however I may desire to retain, if possible, Lord Northcote on my list of private friends, I repeat, it necessarily follows, and should be remembered, that in any further communication your lordship may think proper to address to me, you will be unbosoming yourself to one of your most zealous and least compromising political

adversaries, in the person of your former colleague,

“LAVEMERE.”

“Well, Sir,” said the Duke, “any comments?—is there here a sentence or a word you would be sorry to see my signature affixed to in the newspapers?”

“There is not an expression in this letter, the spirit of which your grace has not avowed, over and over again, in your place as a peer of parliament; and I am not aware even if your grace were despatching it to the public press, instead of the hands of a private friend, that I could suggest any alteration whatever that would be an improvement.”

“Then, Sir, we will send it forth just as it is. The superscription also shall be in my own hand-writing. As it is, in all probability, the last letter poor deluded Northcote will ever receive from me, it shall be autographic throughout. These other letters you will be so good as to direct and seal, and then we’ll bid adieu to London and politics, for a time at least.”

Here the duke touched a particular bell, which gave intimation to the page, whose turn it was to be in waiting in the antichamber, that he was

to approach the presence, and immediately a well dressed gentleman stood before his grace, silently awaiting his commands.

"Mr. Beverley," said the duke, "let the ladies Jane and Matilda be apprised that I shall be ready in ten minutes."

"Their ladyships await your grace's commands."

"Send Doctor Kent to me."

The empiric soon appeared, with his ebony face and ivory teeth, cringing and grinning like a trained monkey about to dance upon a rope under the lash of his keeper.

"Here is a letter, Sir," said the duke, "from a medical professor of great eminence at Aberdeen, a friend of the Duke of Truro, who coincides with Sir Henry Halford's advice as to Hastings, and who mentions a case similar to the marquis's, in which the air of that place has been wonderfully beneficial."

"There never was exactly such a case, your grace. The marquis at the present moment, will unquestionably be benefited by change of air, wherever be the spot to which he is removed ; but as to Hastings in particular, why, when called in, these gentlemen of the diploma must name some place, and I have no particular

objection to that which they recommend. But my lord duke will allow me to repeat, it is the scrupulous attention to the proper administering, in the exact proportion to the ebb and flow of the nervous system of the marquis, the lesser or greater dose of the 'elixir of the sun,' on which his lordship's cure, I speak with all humility, must altogether rest. Proper air—proper diet—gentle, very gentle exercise—the mind lulled or amused—light, very light reading, or entertaining gossip—total absence of all anxieties—no irritation, by contradiction, opposition, or any disappointment—all these auxiliaries we must and do look to; but, I speak with all humility, the grand thing is, the restoring efficacy of the elixir; and there are critical moments, my Lord Duke, when, if a skilful eye was not on the watch properly to administer it, it is alarming to reflect what fatal consequences might follow the neglect, even of a minute."

"But have you not, this very morning, reassured me, Sir, that the marquis is not in a state of immediate danger? I trust you dare not—I beg your pardon—I hope you do not deceive the Duke of Lavemere, in a matter in every sense so important to his happiness as this.

"My lord duke will, I humbly hope, do me

the justice to be assured I dare not deceive him. Doubtless we are all of us in the hands of Him who made us; but, I speak with all humility, if the efficacy of the 'elixir of the sun,' administered by the hands of the discoverer and compounder of that sure restorative, now, for the first time, should fail, and if I should see any symptoms of such a dreadful disappointment, which it may please God to ordain, most assuredly, my Lord Duke, I should not dare to delay a moment to apprise your grace of the approach of actual danger."

The duke was silent and thoughtful for a minute; he then bowed to the empirical sycophant, who instantly obeyed the usual signal of dismissal from the presence, and withdrew with the same ape-like grimaces that he had entered.

When they were alone, "Mr. Collins, Mr. Collins," said the duke, "I am not at all satisfied with this quack, who has so wormed himself into the confidence, I may say, so ingratiated himself into the affections of my poor Caldore. Yet, what can be done? Would to God I had not suffered myself to be so absorbed as I was, by feelings of public duty at that critical moment when the poor fellow returned from abroad, the mere wreck of the son I had

parted with a few years before! But it was, perhaps even then, too late; his constitution even then was, I fear, shattered past repair. Oh, Collins! what a reverse of my hopes! Instead of the eloquent effusions of old English feeling I anticipated from his lips in the lower house, not a syllable has he uttered. Scarcely half-a-dozen times has he even taken his seat. Instead of beholding him an example of princely hospitality, and a model for the heirs of dukedoms, in a noble and well-regulated household of his own, he has been, ever since his return, an invalided guest under the paternal roof; and is now as much an object for the nursery from infirmity, as when an infant child. Collins, I shall lose him! I feel—I feel that I shall lose my son, my beloved son!”

“God forbid!” said Mr. Collins, with unremonious sincerity, thrown off his guard by the unusual pathos of the duke; and he even repeated, “God forbid!”

For a moment nature had asserted her omnipotent empire in the breast even of a Duke of Lavemere, who was perhaps one of the most resolute rebels against her laws, whenever they militated against his inveterate prejudices for some of the opposing maxims of society.

The idea of the death of the marquis was, however, almost instantaneously followed by that of a still more dreadful calamity in the eyes of the duke—the political heresy of his younger brother, whom the decease of the marquis would elevate to that title ; and he broke out suddenly into an exclamation, echoing to Mr. Collins :—“ Yes, God forbid ! God forbid, indeed, that in my old age I should be crushed to the earth by such a calamity ! God forbid that I should go down to the tomb of my ancestors with the horrible conviction, that a Duke of Lavemere, sprung from my loins, is destined to become an English Duke *D'Egalité*, the curse of his country, and the infamy of his race !”

Accustomed as was Mr. Collins to these occasional “pourings out of the spirit” of his patron, he was startled at the force and energy with which these words were uttered ; but perceiving no opening for his mollifying influence, he continued silently to seal and direct ; when there came at that moment to his fingers three letters, one to each of the three elder daughters of the duke, who were on a visit at the seat of their aunt, one of the De Veres of Hampshire.

In the hope of turning the current of unpleasant ideas, Mr. Collins seized the opportunity of

asking the duke, if he should enclose the three letters in one envelope?

“Of course, Sir—of course. There—there again is another source of painful retrospection, as well as anticipation—the situation of these dear, good, excellent, exemplary daughters! Have I not, on this account also, cause of self-reproach at the too zealous devotion of myself to public affairs? The lukewarm indifference with which I have suffered them to reject one noble offer after another, I must confess owes much of its indulgence to the flattering conclusion, that, my daughters, dying spinsters, their fortunes, the bequests of their uncles, would fall into the revenues of the dukedom, and thus enable my heir, Caldore, to pursue his father’s loyal plans and purposes with additional power and splendour, when I should be no more. But now—if—now—if that event—if Belford—but, as you say, God forbid! God forbid! It will not be! No, no—he will recover.”

Now could the secretary speak:—

“O, yes, my lord; with proper care there is every ground of hope. The air of Hastings has, I understand, worked wonders in such sort of disorders.”

“Yes, Collins—yes—we will hope. This

Hastings is, I believe, very fashionable: that is, it attracts a mob of all sorts of people. The mansion is, however, such a one as the Duke of Lavemere, I trust, need not blush to inhabit for a short period. I think you told me it is isolated, and the grounds are walled, so that one may respire fresh air without being exposed to the vulgar curiosity of 'the sea-side fashionables,' that multiplied tribe of upstart bankers and traders who emerge from their counters or counting-houses to these places, where they think themselves privileged to elbow peers in the public walks, and talk liberalism as impudently and loudly in the libraries as Brougham does in the House of Commons."

"The situation fortunately combines all the advantages of space for air and exercise, with the seclusion suitable to a family of your grace's rank."

"The gold table service may not be wanted, but it is as well it was sent. It is not improbable the Duke of Truro and the bishop, his uncle, may pass a few weeks with us. I hope they will; for I am more than ever anxious that the duke should propose, at once, for Lady Jane, and the bishop's nephew, Stafford Bruce, for Lady Matilda. The duke

and the bishop have promised the visit, and Stafford Bruce will accompany them. At all events, we are prepared. Every thing, I believe, has been thought of."

The duke then paused; he placed the forefinger of his right hand upon his lips, and his mind seemed absorbed in such deep reflections, that a by-stander would have supposed he was studying some difficult problem in state or family affairs, when at length he slowly uttered—

"Yes, it shall be so. Mr. Collins, order, if you please, Caldore's barouche to draw up first, instead of my chariot. The pace of travelling may then be regulated by dear Caldore himself, just as he feels able to bear it. We ourselves will follow, for once, instead of lead. Alter the order thus, Sir, if you please: let my daughter's coach be second, the gentlemen of the household third, and then my chariot; only remember, if you please, that my two outriders lead the Marquis's coach, and let the Marquis's courier follow my chariot."

Whilst Mr. Collins proceeded to make these important alterations, the page in waiting was ordered to summon the Abbé Le Clerc to the presence.

The Abbé appeared. He was a very old

man, diminutive in size, very thin, with here and there a silver lock of hair still remaining on his otherwise bald head, and his dark eyes even now beaming forth sparks of intelligence and vivacity, which gave a pleasing animation to his whole countenance. He was extremely neatly dressed, in black, and his air and manners were highly prepossessing.

When the duke was desirous of his conversation, in his moments of relaxation, he always addressed the Abbé in French or Italian ; but in his formal intercourse, he always used the English tongue.

“ Well, Monsieur L’Abbé,” said his grace, “ what is this morning report ? ”

“ O, mi Lor Duc, most good news ; my dear marquis has sleep so sound, he has had such charming dreams, which he told me just now ! Soon as Le Sage dress his lord, he fetch me to hear from his own lips his gay, *jolie* dream. My Lord Marquis dream he was Télémaque, and all night long he was in the grotto of Calypso. So, my Lor Duc, the marquis make me read the passage, so fine, from Fenelon, and then mi Lor Marquis describe his dream more fine, more charmingly *délicieux*, more *amoureux* than the archbishop, a great deal. This be

very good symptom, mi Lor Duc; I think so, Le Docteur Kent think so, and mi Ladi Essington, indeed, think so, too. Only you know, mi Lor Duc, her Ladyship is leetle *mélancholique*; she prefers graver looks; she wish mi Lor Marquis more, what you call, more sad face, which is not so good for mi Lor as merry face."

"Lady Euphemia Essington is an excellent woman, but a little too rigidly Calvinistic in her theology—at least for the male branches of a noble family. She loves Caldore, however, with the affection of a mother; and, to speak truth, I have more reliance on her ladyship's care as a nurse, than on Kent's nostrum, for the restoration of my beloved son. But I was anxious to see you, to repeat my request that you will take care Le Sage and Kent do their duty, and that my dear Caldore has all his comforts. It was scarcely necessary. I know your love for him. Be ready, my good Le Clerc, to assist him to the carriage; and pray be as diverting as you possibly can in his society, for, in spite of good Lady Essington's gloomy Calvinism, you are right, sad faces are not so good for an invalid as merry ones."

So saying, the duke bowed, and as the Abbé retired, there entered, arm in arm, plainly

but tastefully habited, in morning dresses, two as lovely, graceful, and accomplished young ladies, as ever were presented at the Court of Great Britain. Lady Jane, having the precedence which twenty years take over eighteen, first advanced towards their stately sire, before whom both dropped their low curtesy, whilst the duke, *à la Grandison*, with head erect, and shoulders well thrown back, received the respectful salutations of his beauteous daughters, displaying the gracious condescending air of a sovereign, rather than the affectionate warmth of a father. They were, however, so habituated to the duke's coldness and formality, and their minds were at this moment so occupied with the novelty of their excursion to Hastings, instead of a dreaded remove to Lavemere Castle, that even had his grace's reception been more coldly ceremonious than it was, it would not, at that moment, have affected the buoyancy of their youthful spirits.

But no sooner did a distant cough announce the approach of the Marquis of Caldore, than the iron muscles of the ducal visage changed to flesh and blood, and indications of human feelings became actually visible. The door opened, and there was led in a tall, emaciated form,

with a face deadly pale, except a spot or two of hectic red on either cheek, dressed in a rich figured tissue *robe de chambre*, with a sort of turban cap, of crimson silk, edged and lined with ermine. His legs were swollen, and seemed too enormously bulky and too heavy to be appended to his shrunk figure ! He moved forward with evident pain, leaning his whole weight on Le Sage, his first valet, and Kent the empiric, hanging, as it were, by his arms round their bended necks.

The marquis, before he went abroad, had been remarkable for a very handsome face ; and though not a vestige of manly beauty now remained, yet when he affected to smile, which he was perpetually anxious to do, the mould of his lips and chin, and a most beautiful set of artificial teeth, presented some faint resemblance of the former Caldore. One of these smiles, as well as his cough permitted, he now strove hard to exhibit, in return for the kind embraces of the duke, who demonstrated the most unequivocal proofs of his extreme partiality for this his favourite child.

“ You are better, my dear Caldore,” said his grace, “ indeed you are, considerably better.”

Then, turning to the quack—"Kent, Kent, I was, I own—nay, I am sceptical; but if you do—and—and—I hope—I have no doubt you will.—What reward—what recompense can ever"—

Nature had carried the duke's tongue to this point, but the grinning of the ape-like empiric suddenly recalled him to a "sense of his proprieties;" and the rustling of taffety, which no ridicule could cause Lady Euphemia Honoria Maria Essington to relinquish, strengthened the alarm which his pride had received, and he finished the sentence thus—

"I mean to say, that Providence is all-powerful, and mysterious as powerful; if you, Sir, should be the favoured instrument by which the heir of the house of Lavemere is preserved to our prayers, you will not find us niggards in the testimonies of our value of your services."

The Lady Euphemia who, during this speech, had been ushered into the presence by the page in waiting, was as completely an original in her line, as was the duke in his. Her powdered *toupée* and wire-winged cap were surmounted with a huge, spreading white silk hat, to which was a pendant rim of rich black lace, four inches deep; her very tall figure was rather improved than otherwise by a small bell-hoop;

but the antique striped brocade which covered it, and the peaked stomacher of diamonds that descended to it in front, together with the pink satin high-heeled shoes and diamond buckles that peeped forth below it, the point-lace apron, and the point-lace ruffles, the enormous fan, that venerable predecessor of the parasol, and the chased gold snuff-box, altogether made up a perfect picture of the lady of quality in the very earliest part of the reign of King George the Third.

“Pardon me, my dear Duke,” said the Lady Essington; “but it is exceedingly improper, after taking the cordial drops, which I have prevailed on our dear Caldore to receive from my hands, that he should be kept a moment longer than necessary in a perpendicular position. I wish him to resume the horizontal immediately; and I am sure Dr. Kent agrees with me.”

Instantly the grand chamberlain, Collins, having seen that the marquis's coach was ready, orders were pronounced by the duke to commence the procession to the vestibule.

That stage which we have already described, as cleared of all subordinate performers, was now vacant, except that at the bottom of the grand

staircase, on each side, stood a footman in full livery, and at the outer door, the hall doors being thrown back, stood the head porter on one side, and the deputy on the other, in their robes of office, whilst two more footmen, with difficulty, kept the steps clear from the curious crowd, and other two secured a passage from the steps to the drawn-up carriage.

Mr. Collins, with his programme in hand, now appeared, anxiously walking to and fro across the vestibule, at one time glancing an eye upon the equipages in waiting, and then again returning to the foot of the grand staircase.

The grand staircase being directly in front of the hall doors, afforded the crowd of spectators in the street a prolonged view of the procession. First, came the Marquis of Caldore, still supported by the *soi-disant* Dr. Kent, and the valet, Le Sage, followed by the Abbé. The fatigue, even thus far, had greatly exhausted his weak frame; but with the perseverance of a Lord Ogleby, the spirit of the shattered rake rallied itself, in order to pass through the crowd with coveted *éclat*, and he nodded, and laughed, and coughed; he smilingly attempted a joke with the Abbé one moment, and the next his face was distorted with pain. In this way he

reached the carriage, amidst mingled expressions of wonder and ridicule, pity and vulgar merriment, which his appearance and dress excited:

The Abbé, having taken his seat by his lordship's side, the marquis reclined his head on the shoulder of this favourite companion, who continued to present to him alternately a gold box, containing lozenges, for his cough, and an enamelled and pearl essence-bottle, filled with *eau de Cologne*, for his temples, which were carried in the hands of the empiric and the valet, who occupied the back seat of the barouche.

The next character who appeared was the Lady Euphemia Honoria Maria Essington, who descended leaning on the arm of the honourable Miss Howard, a portionless daughter of the younger branch of a noble house, who acted as companion, or a sort of maid of honour, to the ladies Jane and Matilda. The shouts of laughter which the antiquated costume and haughty demeanour of the Lady Essington drew from the vulgar part of the crowd covered Miss Howard with confusion, and brought blushes into the cheeks of the ladies Jane and Matilda, who immediately followed her, escorted by Mr.

Beverley, the page in waiting, and Mr. Collins. The striking contrast of their beauty and youth, their modesty of deportment, and elegant simplicity of dress absolutely silenced the laugh of ridicule raised by Lady Euphemia's grotesque appearance; and as the second carriage drew off, the buzz of admiration from the spectators was loud and universal.

The third coach was now at the door, when, slowly descending the grand staircase, as principal among the gentlemen of the household, was seen the Rev. Dr. Richardson, domestic chaplain to the duke, who, though really an amiable and worthy man, and rather abstemious for a chaplain, was of a plethoric constitution, and subject to gout. His very much powdered cauliflower wig by its whiteness so prodigiously increased the redness of his reverence's plump, florid face, and his short stature was so provokingly out of all keeping with the protuberant dignity of his gouty legs, that, however wisely his grace of Lavemere might have calculated upon inspiring the lower orders with a wholesome awe of the aristocracy by this grand display of ducal pomp, the public exhibition of his chaplain unfortunately did not tend to lessen the vulgar errors of the hungry poor relative to

the too abundant produce of the pastures set apart for the subsistence of the learned doctors of the church.

By the side of Dr. Richardson walked the comptroller of the household, old Mr. Phelps, to whose inspection the accounts of every dependent on the duke, from the principal steward to the lowest groom, were submitted, and who was reckoned "*as rich as a Jew*;" and following them came Mr. Beverley and Mr. Bates, ushers or pages of the presence, and perfect gentlemen, according to the code of Chesterfield. At the intimation of Mr. Collins, however, the coach for these gentlemen of the household drew off a few paces from the door, to make room for the duke's own chariot, and "the gentlemen themselves" took their stations two on each side at the foot of the staircase, waiting to let the duke pass to his carriage, before they proceeded to their's: for although his grace had thought proper that in the order of the carriages himself should be the last, without a fear of being mistaken for the least in the procession, Mr. Collins just recollected in time the necessity of this homage to the ruling passion of his patron.

CHAPTER VI.

AN INTRUDER.

AND now ensued a solemn pause of about five minutes, during which all eyes, especially those of Mr. Chamberlain, or Secretary Collins, were fixed upon the highest step of the grand stairs, whilst his ears listened for the well known creaking of the ducal shoes. He thought he heard it, and was just about to pull on his gloves, which was the concerted signal to the head porter, who would then have signalled the footman at the carriage-door, that the great Duke was on the move, when suddenly there arose a noise from without, as of a loud altercation, in the area before the steps of Lavemere House ;

and at the very moment when the duke had descended half-way down the flight of stairs, the attention of every one was called from his grace by the simultaneous rapid movements of the two porters from each side of the grand doors, intercepting some obstinate individual, who had overcome all resistance from the footmen stationed outside, and who was loud in his demands to see the duke.

There ensued a scene.

Arrested in his descent by the noise, the Duke stood, in an attitude of surprise, some dozen steps above the level of the floor of the vestibule. His gentlemen of the household, whether from fear or affection, with the two footmen stationed there before, formed a line in front of the stairs, as if in protection of their lord. Mr. Secretary Collins took a position in the very centre of the vestibule, now looking for orders to the Duke, and now turning to the daring intruder, who had passively suffered himself to be made prisoner by the hands of a porter on each of his arms, his whole senses appearing to be absorbed by the image of the duke before him, upon which his eyes glared for some moments, whilst he stood silent and motionless as an apparition. But there was speculation and expression also in

those eyes;—they were the eyes of Abraham Bray.

Without attempting to free his arms from the grasp of the porters, he exclaimed, in a calm, but fine manly tone of voice, still keeping his eyes fixed on the same object, “Is this the customary welcome with which Duke Lavemere greets the stranger recommended to his hospitality by his distant friends?”

These few words operated with the power of Harlequin’s sword upon all the dumb-founded performers in the scene. It was no longer feared that the speaker was either an assassin or a lunatic. Instantly the hands of the porters fell from their hold, and, leaving their prisoner free, they resumed their former stations. The gentlemen of the household followed their example; the Duke himself descended the twelve steps between the floor and his “nobility,”—and Secretary Collins approached his Grace, in obedience to his beckon. Abraham Bray alone remained firm on the ground he had taken. He was dressed precisely as on the day of his arrival in London; and, notwithstanding the somewhat ludicrous singularity of that dress, there was a noble air in his countenance, that, as he stood with his hat in his hand, challenging,

as it were, the duke's reply, every beholder felt conscious that they were gazing upon no common sort of man.

A whisper passed from Duke Lavemere to his secretary, and the latter, approaching Mr. Bray with one of his conciliating smiles, and in an under tone of voice, requested to know the nature of his business with the duke, which he presumed must be extremely urgent, from the determination evinced to force an interview at such an ill-timed moment.

"My name is Bray!" was the intruder's loud reply; and still fixing his scrutinizing eyes full on the duke's, he continued, "Personally, I am a stranger to the Duke of Lavemere; but I bring with me a letter, from a very old friend and correspondent of his grace—one Eustace Camerton!"

"Eustace Camerton!—Eustace Camerton!" exclaimed the duke, as he rushed towards the stranger, exhibiting, in his agitated countenance, surprise, curiosity, and alarm—a pale hue overspread his cheeks, and his whole frame trembled. "You do not mean to tell me, Sir, that Eustace Camerton is alive?"

The unexpected utterance of that name by Abraham Bray had shaken the very soul of

Lavemere, and thrown him totally off his guard. The shock lasted, however, but for a moment; by a strong effort, the feelings of the man were subdued sufficiently for concealment, and the duke, recollecting he was in public, was almost instantly the duke again. Firmly and calmly he appeared to stand before the stranger, whilst the latter deliberately took from his pocket-book a letter, which he silently delivered into his grace's hands, who, in spite of his command of nerve, could not prevent a slight tremor of the hand, as he recognised the well-known writing of Eustace Camerton!

"Ye—ye—yes—this is, doubtless, his handwriting! And you say, Sir, he is still living? You have indeed surprised me! So convinced have I long been of the death of my old correspondent, from his total silence, and the failure of all my attempts to trace his movements, or obtain the least tidings respecting him, that I confess to you this letter comes upon me with something like the awe of a communication from the grave."

"I beg to assure your grace, however, that I am no ambassador from the dead; it falls not to my destiny, thank Heaven, to be entrusted with despatches from the world of spirits to the

corporeal inhabitants of this earth. When that letter was placed in my hands by the writer, I can vouch for it, he was a living creature of flesh and blood, and likely to remain such, at least as long as I shall."

"And where, Sir, is this singular old man living now? His last communication to me was from North America!"

"That is a question which, upon reflection, your grace will not expect that I can answer. When you call to mind how seldom Eustace Camerton wrote two following letters, as he himself informed me, from the same country—how rapidly he removes himself from one congregation of human beings to another, all round the globe—and how vain, as your grace admits, have been your own endeavours to trace his steps, you cannot be surprised that I am as ignorant of his movements as he must be of mine. When, however, the letter, now in your grace's hand, was written, Camerton and I had been for a short time inmates of the same dwelling in the city of Paris."

"Indeed!—so near!" exclaimed the duke, with a very strong emphasis, and instantly falling back a few paces, rested his elbow on a marble pedestal, which supported a fine Grecian

statue of Ceres, and eagerly opening the letter, found the contents run thus :—

“ He who delivers this should be an elderly man, about five feet nine in height, of a singularly bronze complexion, wearing his own grey hair, dressed in the old style, and his clothes of one colour—green. Should the exterior of the individual before you correspond with this description, you will then put to him those questions, agreed upon by us, as private signals for the identity of any confidential messenger, to be employed by me ; but which signals, up to this moment, we have never had occasion to use. I have now, however, communicated to this individual, who travels under the name of Abraham Bray, important information, which I have almost by miracle discovered, relative to certain Anti-English cabals, at this time hatching in Lisbon, which I dare not venture to write, even in cypher, and which will interest and surprise you, above all the many surprises you have ever yet received. If, then, the bearer’s responses to our signals demonstrate that he is my true Abraham Bray, you may as implicitly trust in him, as in me myself. From childhood we have been known to each other ; he has been, in person, or by letters, I may say, my inseparable compa-

nion, and I do not believe there is a secret of Eustace Camerton unknown to him, or of his to which Eustace Camerton is a stranger. I need say no more ; for in conversing with him, you will, in fact, possess every advantage of question and reply that could result from my own presence in my beloved England, if the Disposer of Events had seen fit to bestow such happiness on the long, long-exiled wanderer.

“ EUSTACE CAMERTON.”

The duke's countenance displayed, in spite of all his efforts to conceal it, the intense interest excited by the perusal of this letter, and the embarrassment which its reception, in such a *mal-à-propos* situation, created. He cast his eye towards the bearer of it ; his dress and appearance left scarcely any doubt of the fact that there stood before him one who possessed the power of unravelling mysteries that had tortured his mind for many years, and his heart panted for the opportunity of applying the decisive test of the signal questions.

Notwithstanding the alarm occasioned by so long delay to those members of the ducal family, already seated in their carriages, and the awkwardness of their situation in being exposed

to the vulgar observation of an increasing crowd, the duke seeing no alternative, despatched Mr. Collins to inform them, that business of emergency compelled him to detain them a few minutes; and then beckoning Mr. Beverley to the foot of the grand stairs, whispered that page to attend the stranger, and conduct him (for the purpose of delay) through the picture gallery to the library; to which the duke himself ascended: and touching a spring in a cabinet (such was the order in which every book and paper was kept), in a minute a small book of cyphers was in his hands, which confirmed the accuracy of his grace's memory; and ere the page ushered Abraham Bray into the presence, the book was re-deposited, and the duke seated in state to receive him.

"Take a chair, Sir; pray, be seated," said his grace, with an air intended to be gracious.

Little did he dream at that moment this proud and haughty aristocrat, inflated beyond all bounds with the title, rank, and fortune he possessed,—little did he dream that he then addressed the real and lawful inheritor of that dukedom and those estates, the accidental and false, though undisputed title to which had made him so weakly vain. Yet such was the truth;

and he who now, for motives hereafter to be revealed, condescended to be thus catechised as a stranger, could, many years ago, had he so chosen, have stripped this spurious peer of "all his greatness," and proclaimed himself real Duke of Lavemere.

"Before, Sir, we proceed any further on the business, which, as you perceive, at a most inconvenient moment has brought you here," said the duke in possession to the duke in right, "you will excuse me asking you whether, besides this letter, you have any corroborative testimony that you are the identical Abraham Bray, in whose hands my old correspondent placed it; and that neither force, fraud, or accident has made you the possessor of a paper not originally entrusted to your keeping. This, Sir, you will understand to be a question of course, and, as lawyers say—without prejudice—so I say without offence."

"My Lord Duke, I was prepared for your question, and was instructed by my friend, Camerton, in what words to reply, and, I say, 'Try me.'"

"Tell me the word Eustace Camerton would have fixed upon as the pass-word of the camp
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the night before the battle of Bosworth Field, if he had been Richard the Third?"

"Ambition."

"Tell me the word Eustace Camerton would have fixed upon as the pass-word of the camp the night before the battle of Bosworth Field, if he had been Richmond?"

"Union."

"Tell me in what year I received the first communication from Eustace Camerton?"

"One thousand seven hundred and eighty."

"Where was Eustace Camerton when he wrote that first letter to me?"

"At Windsor."

"And where was Eustace Camerton when that letter reached me?"

"At Calais."

"Enough. I am satisfied, Sir, that, be you whatever else you may, you are the confidant of Camerton, and from this moment you are also mine, in all that relates to the mysterious friendship which that romantic being has so unequivocally evinced for the house of Lavemere. But I am more embarrassed than I can describe, by your arrival at the present moment. I regret extremely the rude resistance you met with from my people; but you will be good

enough to attribute it to an over zeal in their obedience to my positive orders. These injunctions do not arise from fear. I have never inflicted wrongs or injuries, and therefore have nothing to dread from revenge; but you can form no idea of the absolute necessity I am under to put the strictest sentinels upon my time. I would often gladly purchase my own hours at any price, but they are ravished from me in spite of all my precaution. Your arrival at this critical moment perplexes me more than you can imagine."

Here the duke rose, and walked to the balcony.

"You see, Sir, how many people I am keeping in waiting here. My poor Caldore, my eldest son, is in so wretched a state of health, that I have been unable to resist the trial of a short residence at Hastings—a place near the sea—on his account. It will be a purgatory to me, but I have consented, and the thing is done. I go, as you perceive, with part of my town establishment, and in two minutes we should have moved. I cannot regret the interruption of your arrival, but I am puzzled as to—"

Here the duke placed the palm of his right

hand upon his forehead, and actually looked the perplexity he felt ; and he continued.

“ I have so much to inquire and to learn of you, Mr. Bray, and yet how to detain these people another minute—”

“ I see, my lord, all the little crosses thrown by accident in the way of this our first interview, but let me at once relieve your grace. The political points, the Lisbon tragi-comedy, you will find transferred from my memory to paper in this short memoir, which I have written since my arrival seven days ago, and now confide to your own hands.” [Here he delivered a paper to the duke.] “ Your grace will make some use of the intelligence I know, for the benefit of your country, though no longer one of the pilots of the state. Take that with you, my lord, into the country ; it is the only part of my communication that is of a temporary nature. The rest will not suffer in value from a few days’ delay. To be candid, I am anxious to execute, as soon as possible, an important commission for my friend Camerton, in connection with a *protégé* of his, who, till lately, has been under the guardianship of a religious person in this country, but who, from his correspondence

with missionaries in all parts of the world, holds in his hands an engine once peculiar to the successors of Loyola."

"You mean Gregory!" exclaimed the duke.

"The same, my lord. Camerton, in some way or other, is connected with Gregory and his late ward, both of whom I am anxious to see; but business of an urgent nature has occupied me till now. I should have been at Gregory's to-day, but accidentally hearing that your grace was on the move this morning, I resolved to obtain an audience, merely to deliver my credentials. This having done, I now, my lord, take leave for the present. Your commands will, at any hour you please, bring me again into your presence, either here or at Hastings, upon sufficient notice sent to this address. I call or send there for letters every day."

The duke took the presented card—"Mr. Abraham Bray, Messrs. Hammersleys, Pall-mall," and then exclaimed, "Eustace Camerton connected with Gregory and the foundling, his ward!—I am so taken by surprise—I—I— with Gregory—that crafty saint. Why, then, Sir, it is necessary that—yes—you must be cautioned, Sir, or probably you may be deceived by the ignorance and inexperience of this Mr.

—(God knows what they call him)—this foundling may think fit, from gratitude for the notice bestowed on him by a branch of the Lavemeres, to sound the praises of Belford the liberal—once, but not now, a son of mine, who has somewhere or other picked up an acquaintance with this anonymous young gentleman, whose wealth, it seems, induces certain “free and easy” nobles to countenance him; but pray bear in mind, Sir, should you happen to hear named this said Lord Belford, remember, Sir, that black and white, light and darkness, are not more opposite in their qualities than, in almost all their principles and opinions, are the Duke of Lavemere and the liberal Belford. With this caution, for the present, we separate. I need not say how anxious I shall remain till the duties imposed upon me by my station (and which I have not yet learned the ‘snug and comfortable’ method of throwing off my shoulders), permit me to see you in a few days, either here or at Hastings. Pardon me, Mr. Bray—pardon me—excuse this very unsuitable reception from the Duke of Lavemere to an ambassador from Eustace Cameron. I will endeavour to atone for it; but I am now bewildered—distracted. So many images of the past crowd on my brain—so many

anxieties for the future start all around me, I—I—adieu, Sir. Excuse my requesting you to remain here a few minutes alone. Your appearance has excited some curiosity; it will be better you should wait till the crowd are dispersed. Imagine for me all that my peculiar situation should induce me to say to you, Mr. Bray; and give me credit for wishing I could now say it. Adieu, Sir—Adieu."

No sooner was the door of the library closed on Abraham Bray, than the consciousness that he was then sitting as a solitary stranger in that splendid apartment of a noble mansion, which by birthright was his own, began to conjure up a vision of the memory, which vividly displayed before his mind's eye scenes that had been acted many years ago, and characters, the majority of whom now rested in their graves. Though scarcely five minutes elapsed ere he started from his reverie, and perceived that the long train of carriages had moved off, yet, brief as was the duration of this day-dream, it comprised a retrospect of very many years, recalling events in which the shades of many public men were mingled with those of some of his nearest relatives and dearest friends. But the mind of Abraham Bray had been long accus-

tomed to soliloquize on these visitations of the memory; and his heart was less and less painfully affected by their recurrence, as reason had demonstrated the puerile futility of regret; and experience had proved how common, how general are the disappointments of human hopes, which the sanguine feelings of every unfortunate youth make him so ready to believe fall peculiarly and individually to his lot alone. One sigh his manly bosom heaved as he descended the grand staircase, and then rallying his spirits, that had been momentarily depressed, he hurried through the hall, and was briskly on his way to the abode of Mr. Gregory, in Bedford Square.

CHAPTER VII.

A GREAT MAN'S ORIGIN.

ALTHOUGH Abraham Bray is travelling towards Bedford Square as rapidly as the jaded hacknies which he called off the stand at Charing Cross can convey him, it is necessary to our design to unfold some important secrets, and delineate some remarkable characters connected with the humble origin and extraordinary elevation of James Gregory, Esq. M.P. before that interview takes place which, without this retrospective view, would be unintelligible to the reader.

It is known that Scotland has the honour of this "good and great man's" birth, and that he was not thirteen years old when he made his

first entrance into London. Whether James tramped it all the way to London from the southern of the Tweed—arrived by smack at Billingsgate, or waggon at Holborn Bridge, are disputed points upon which he himself alone is able to enlighten this inquiring age, and, unless he should be tempted to become, according to the reigning fashion an auto-biographer, never will this important fact be given to the world. In that case only, is there a chance that the curiosity of mankind may be indulged with the elucidation of another existing doubt, to wit, whether, when Gregory set forth upon his travels to the south, he left behind him, in the north, father or mother, sister or brother, or known kindred of any degree. The earliest authentic chronicles of this now great man (and to these we shall confine ourselves) commence on the memorable day of his arrival in the metropolis of England ; and thus these chronicles record :—

In the spring of the year one thousand seven hundred and sixty-five, as Lady Williams, the widow of Sir Watkin Williams, knight and alderman, was passing along Bishopsgate Street, one Sunday morning, on her return home from the seven o'clock lecture at the meeting-house in Little St. Helen's, her pious mind was irre-

sistibly drawn off from the meditations to which Dr. Gibbon's discourse had given rise, by the remarkably forlorn appearance of a tall, raw-boned lad, whose carrotty and uncombed locks no bonnet covered, whose bare breast braved the winds, and whose brawny legs nor hose nor shoes encumbered.

On what nice turns the fortune of a man's whole life depends ! Thus Gregory, the naked and the destitute, was placed precisely at that moment, precisely on that spot which proved to be the first step in the ladder of prosperity, which he ever after was to ascend.

Life is a game at which all men must play. Is it a game of skill or a game of chance ? Neither, yet both. There are "throws and turns of fate" which no human wisdom can foresee, no prudence can prevent ; and these throws govern, in a great degree, all the affairs of men, though knowledge, vigilance, and acuteness will not only enable us to regulate our own, but to take advantage of and profit by the moves of others. But then, how often is it seen in life, as at backgammon, that one single lucky or unlucky throw gives to the most ignorant or careless, and snatches from the most skilful and cautious players, game after game.

No pre-concerted design or purpose of his own had conducted Gregory to that particular spot. He was wandering, and had for hours been wandering from street to street, in search of food and occupation, when, arriving at the end of Gracechurch Street, where three different roads invited him, he paused, and looking round him, actually doubted whether to cross over and pursue his way right onward, turn eastward to Leadenhall, or westward to Cornhill. Was it his star, his fate; was it any thing that decided, or was it not decided, but only merely happened that he took the path he did? Metaphysicians, that's a point for you! The historic fact is this: he went right onward, and, by doing so, he caught the eye of Lady Williams, which most certainly he would not have done, if he had turned to right or left.

Nearly at that end of Bishopsgate Street, by which the Scotch lad entered it, now stands, and then, newly erected, stood the celebrated London tavern; and it so happened (another problem in metaphysics), that just as Gregory arrived in front of the grand building, one of the menials of the establishment was scientifically operating with that useful instrument, a birch-broom, upon the dust and orange-peels

that had accumulated in the course of the preceding day, upon the flight of steps before the doors.

The keen glance of the hungry young place-hunter was attracted to a survey of this large and handsome edifice, which, he concluded, must be the mansion of some great lord; "laird," he would have said, if he had uttered what he thought, for his accent was the broadest of broad Scotch; and had our tale been written a few years ago, the reader would certainly have had some score of these pages in the then popular dialect of Caledonia; but the tide has turned, and it is now allowable to translate Scotch, as well as Greek, and thus to spare the English readers of the English novels the trouble of referring to a glossary.

When Gregory's eyes had well surveyed the building, he cautiously directed them to an examination of the physiognomy of the sweeper of the steps, who, however low his rank, was evidently some member of the noble household. The porter himself had paused from his labour; he was old and ugly, he wore a red worn-out night-cap; and as he rested his chin upon the handle of his broom, frowning scornfully, and even maliciously, at the half-naked lad before

him, he almost terrified him to silence by his witch-like visage.

At length hunger gave the poor boy courage ; he approached the steps, and in broad Scotch, of course, ventured to make known his urgent want of some employment. He spoke without much bashfulness ; but still in such a humble tone of voice, and with such propitiating looks and gestures, as become poor starving fellows out of place, to gentlemen in office.

He spoke, and that moment was the crisis of his fortune. Had the cross old cockney, to whose compassion he appealed, dismissed him with only the commonest phrases of civility, he would have bowed submissively, passed on quietly, and Lady Williams would not have been disturbed from her religious meditations.

But the scene was different.

In 1765, it must be borne in mind, our fellow-subjects beyond the borders were looked at by the Londoners through very different optics to those now in fashion. At that period, the Scotch appeared (in the eyes of the lower orders especially) a race of barbarians ; and so far were they below all comparison with the Athenians of antiquity, that in those days it never could have entered the mind of the least prejudiced English-

man, or even of a Scotchman himself, that there existed such a resemblance in the manners, customs, and pursuits, arts, sciences, and literature, of the two capitals of Greece and Scotland, as to entitle Edinburgh to the denomination of "the Modern Athens."

Very differently indeed, in the eye of public opinion, at that time, appeared "sweet Edinburgh town." No sooner, therefore, did the broad Scotch dialect of his suppliant unwelcomely grate upon the ears of the Londoner, than the prejudiced old varlet vomited forth a volley of low vulgarisms, not only upon the head of the astonished boy, but the whole Scottish race, and, not satisfied with foul words, added the insult of gestures by spreading open the palms of his hands, and alternately rubbing the fingers of one hand between the extended fingers of the other, thus intended to imply the charge of poor Gregory's being afflicted with a certain tormenting cutaneous disease, to which cocknies have given the name of Scotch fiddle.

'Tis said a worm will turn when trodden on ; no wonder then that even a poor, destitute Scotch lad endeavoured to retort upon the merciless calumniator of his countrymen. He did so—and the ire of the cockney was so inflamed, that he

rushed down the tavern steps, with charged birch-broom, just at that very division of a moment when, by stepping back, Lady Williams had barely time to save her head of hair, lace lappets, and black silk calash from being all carried off upon the points of the hostile weapon, whilst her ears were stung with the vulgar vociferations of "Get off with you, you lousy Scotch beggar—off, I say, you varmin—get away with you—vy don't ye stay and starve with your Scotch crew at home—we vants none of ye here—we're overrun areddy with Scotch beggars—off, you Scotch varmin—off, I say, you Scotch beggar."

The rage of the cockney thus vented, he drew back with some sense of shame, when he discovered that the passage of a lady, with a servant in livery behind her, had been arrested by his broom; but the attention of Lady Williams was then directed to the lad, whose forlorn appearance, as already described, excited her compassion. Scotch herself, she pitied him the more because he was a Scot, and lamented deeply that a Scot should be a beggar. But when the boy, emboldened by the presence of a third person, stepped promptly forward, excited indignation flashing from his eyes, and in that accent

she so well remembered, and so much loved to hear, declared that it was true he came from Scotland, and was proud of it; but that he scorned to beg, and that all he asked or wanted was to know where he could get work to earn a bit of bread, then did the generous heart of the rich Scotch widow glow within her, and she instantly resolved to afford him her temporary protection.

Casting a look of scorn on the vile defamer of her countrymen, as she threw back her calash, she exclaimed, "For shame, for shame, you cruel man; your heart is harder than the stones you sweep." Then turning to the footman who attended her, said, "Peter, let this poor lad come home with you, I will myself inquire into his case. If he turn not out an exception to his countrymen, and a disgrace to Scotland, it shall not fare the worse with him that his country and mine are one and the same; for that very circumstance which has subjected his wretchedness to the vulgar ridicule of a low menial, claims, and shall receive, the favour of Lady Williams, provided his conduct shall be found to deserve it." This speech, and the self-announcement of her title, were intended more for reproof and correction of the prejudiced

porter than ostentatious encouragement to the astonished lad, who bowed, however, proportionally lower to his titled benefactress, and at a most respectful distance followed the heels of the footman, Peter Price; a faithful but proud and pepper-tempered old Welshman, who had been many years servant in the family of the late Sir Watkin Williams.

Peter, in spite of all his labours to get rid of prejudices, was scarcely less inveterate in his jealousies (he had no hatred) of the Scotch than even the low varlet of the London tavern. This jealousy, however, was not without a cause. As long as his old master Sir Watkin lived, he ruled sovereign in his own household; and though devotedly attached to the bonnie Scotch lassie, whom he married without a penny, on account of her piety, as he said, (but she had a very pretty face,) the Welch influence prevailed in all and every department at home and abroad, wherever Sir Watkin had power. But the last will and testament of the Welsh knight transferred the sceptre of domestic sovereignty to the fair hands of the Lady Williams, and from that period the Scotch ascendancy was but too visible to others as well as Peter Price, though none so painfully felt its operations as poor Peter: for

oh! sad reverse—the kitchen fire-side, and the kitchen table, so long gladdened by the presence of pretty, prattling Peggy Wilkins—a merry cousin of his own—head cook and housekeeper, were now governed by Mistress Macfarlane, a methodist from Dumfries, the sound of whose voice Peter scarcely ever heard, except in saying her long graces before and after meals, or in a solemn tone requesting him to buy Scotch snuff for her at a certain famous shop near the Royal Exchange. Prejudice once sown, thrives quickly in most soils; and Peter's against Scotch influence had grown almost to an antipathy against the Scotch, both high and low. But the poor Scotch lad then following at his heels, of course could not know this fact, and, therefore, was completely at a loss to divine the cause that, every now and then, as Peter looked back on him, it seemed as if he were about to spit upon him, in return for the lowly bows that Gregory made each time he caught his leader's eye.

Thus they proceeded on, till they arrived at the corner of one of the three celebrated mercantile lanes in Fenchurch Street (it would be more particular than proper in the present case to name it), turning down which, Peter ran for-

ward a few steps, and knocked a quicker and louder knock than usual, (it was, in fact, an angry one,) at the private door of a stone-fronted dwelling house, with warehouses attached, which had been erected, not long before his death, by the late Sir Watkin, on the same scite where previously had stood certain ancient tenements, consisting of much timber and few bricks, in which his family had carried on the business of a drysalter and druggist for above a century.

The structure, as it was in 1765, was deemed a noble mansion, for the city ; and as Gregory raised his eyes from base to attic, he thought of it, as he did the London tavern, that it was fitting for a *Laird*. There was an area entrance to the basement story, and a flight of steps descending to it on the outside of the house ; and to these steps, with a most contemptuous turn-up of the nose, as if he had been throwing to a starving dog a bone, Peter pointed the attention of the "Scotch beggar," as he would have called him, if he dared ; and then following his lady into the hall, without once turning round to see if his dumb signal was observed, with his heel he shut the door, almost in the face of the poor barefooted and half-famished boy, who then

tremblingly crawled down into the kitchen of that mansion, of which, in a few short years afterwards, he became the lord and master.

The notes of the nightingale never afforded greater rapture to the most enthusiastic admirer of the feathered choir than did the discordant screech of Mrs. Macfarlane, of Dumfries, to the ears of the unexpected, the unknown intruder upon her subterraneous dominions; for the screech was a Scotchwoman's screech. This rencontre was another lucky throw for James, as it gave him an opportunity to tell his own tale to his own countrywoman, in his own way, about the cruel porter and the good lady, taking care to sound her praises, for the honour and glory of Scotland. And this he did before the appearance of Peter from the realms above, with a summons to Mrs. Macfarlane to attend her lady in a council, which decided the future fortune of her protégée.

The tale James told the housekeeper disclosed, in a few words, all he knew of his own origin. He had been brought up, he said, by a cross dame, whom he believed to be his step-mother, at a village not far from Drysdale, and that fact alone won Mrs. Macfarlane's favour for the boy; for Drysdale was, she said, but

twelve miles from her own dear Dumfries—and then she talked to him of Solway Frith, and of the vale of Annan. Harsh words, hard blows, had fare, and frowning looks, the boy said, sufficiently convinced him that he was deemed a burthen on his tyrant step-dame; and so he had come, without her leave, like other lads from Scotland, of whose luck he had been told, to try his fortunes in the South; resolved, he added, to do his best to live in London—but to die rather than return. This tale was reported to the Lady Williams by her privy counsellor, with all the glossy pathos she could command, in order to secure the installation of her new favourite in the chimney corner of that kitchen where she ruled the roast; and where she could in many ways display her patriotic patronage of the young wanderer from the banks of Annan.

Lady Williams inquired no further—naturally benevolent, she was not long in debating with herself; (and she had no superior to consult,) as to the course of christian charity she intended to pursue. It was enough that he was hungry—she resolved to feed him—he was naked, and she determined to clothe him—he was literally a stranger, and she threw open the doors of her own dwelling, and took him in.

Such was the *début* of James Gregory on the stage of the world in London; and humble as were the parts he was for some time destined to fill, a short history of his manner of performing them, perhaps may be useful, and not totally devoid of interest.

He could not commence much lower than he did; for it so happened there was at that moment a vacant office in the establishment, that of errand boy under the porters, who were under the warehousemen, who were under the clerks, who were under Mr. Obadiah Slee, who had been raised without any capital to the rank of managing partner during the minority of Mr. Watkin Williams, who, at the introduction of James Gregory, as errand-boy, was in his seventeenth year, and on whose account it was that Lady Williams, to the wonder of all the knowing people on 'Change, continued in trade, as Sir Watkin had died extremely rich.

There was, however, in the will of Sir Watkin, as might have been seen for a shilling in the Prerogative-office, in Doctor's Commons, the following clause, but which, of course, the wonderers had not taken the trouble to inspect:—

“And further, my will is, that the said Dame Margaret Williams, my beloved wife, and the

said Obadiah Slee, shall and do conformably to the above recited instructions, carry on, manage, and conduct the aforesaid business and concerns under the firm of Williams and Co., subject to the controul and inspection of the aforesaid trustees, George Smith and Ezekiel Jenkins, in manner aforesaid, until the above-named Watkin Williams, my said son, shall arrive at the full age of twenty-five years, which will be in the year of our Lord, one thousand seven hundred and seventy-three, at which period my will is that he be put into full possession," &c. &c. &c.

The brief history of Sir Watkin's will is this. One of the most lucrative, in fact the principal branch of business carried on by the worthy alderman under the designation of a drysalter and druggist, was the monopoly of an article then scarcely known in London beyond a select circle, who kept the secret like true freemasons, and to whom, as well as to Sir Watkin, it proved a mine of wealth. We must not be too explicit in describing what the article was, but it had this quality—all such brewers as were the privileged customers of Williams and Co. could brew stronger porter, ale, and amber than any of their rivals at about a quarter of the cost, and therefore gained seventy-five per

cent. more than the unenlightened in the art of chemical compositions. It has been latterly insinuated by hum-drum sticklers to the mere malt and hop system of brewing, maliciously, perhaps, that since the extension of these discoveries in chemistry, apoplexies have increased ten to one. It may be so—what then? There must be something of a depopulating nature encouraged to counteract the effects of Abernethy's blue pill, vaccination, and a long peace, or we shall have the Malthus' prophecy fulfilled before the eyes of the living prophet; and hence it is no longer disreputable to distil the poison called gin, or disgraceful to get ten thousand a year as brewers' druggists.

It was different in 1763, the year when Sir Watkin Williams departed this life; and his will was expressly made to protect a "secret worth knowing," for the benefit of his son, till he was of an age when it was presumed he would be discreet enough to keep it for his own advantage. All accounts of sales, purchases, and other manœuvres therefore that related to this important department of the drug business were managed exclusively by Obadiah Slee and the two trustees, all discreet men, and of ultra-pious reputation; so that not one of the clerks, or

warehousemen under Obadiah Slee, not even Lady Williams, nor her son himself as yet suspected the existence of the golden secret.

Two years of widowhood had Lady Williams passed, when James, the poor Scotch boy, was admitted into her service. Though a mere child in years, and in rank only an errand boy, yet from the very day on which James first felt the luxury of shoes and stockings, conscious that he had gained a footing—feeling that he had ground to stand upon, he constantly held up his head, began to reconnoitre the level around him, and the heights above him, with a resolution to ascend if possible, but never to be lower.

Warehousemen and porters in those days were very different beings to what they have become since Joseph Lancaster and Dr. Bell opened the gate of knowledge to the lowest and poorest Briton ; and the porters, whose instructions and commands the boy, of course, was told to receive as from his superiors, these men James soon discovered were mere animals, not to say beasts of burthen ; for none of them could either read or write, or had received any other education than is often given to dogs, who are trained to fetch and carry, or to draw a truck.

James, on the other hand, though he had come

from Scotland with nothing in his stomach, and almost nothing on his back, certainly brought something in his head, for he could read and write, and knew by rote the assembly's catechism, and the multiplication table. This knowledge alone raised the boy far above men so much his seniors, but infinitely more so did his habits of abstemiousness and self-denial, which preserved for him the constant and ready aid of a naturally clear and acute understanding; whilst the degraded beings, the porters, as if not low enough from want of education, perpetually deprived themselves of the common lights of human reason by the intoxicating or stupifying effects of gin and beer.

To these causes unquestionably it must be attributed that though these men, as they were called, had been for many years labouring in the service of the Williamses, they never had heard of or suspected that there was any secret in the possession of the family beyond the common secrets of all trades; whereas, the boy had not been twelve months in the warehouse when he began to surmise not only that there were secrets, but that they were secrets, the knowledge of which, if attainable, could not fail in

process of time amply to reward all the toils and stratagems, all the labour and patience devoted to the task of their discovery.

Though his menial rank and services properly confined the errand-boy to the kitchen or the warehouse, this juvenile Paul Pry, whose learning was neither suspected by others, nor betrayed by himself, lost no safe opportunity of peeping into books and papers in the clerks' counting-house, where he would frequently "intrude" for a few minutes in the day-time, and never failed, at night or morning, when he swept the floor and rubbed the desks, to pick up all the paper atoms of torn letters, which he would put together at his private leisure. His eyes and ears were also always open, and his memory being good, he soon formed a register of every frequenter of the counting-house, and could pretty accurately ascertain the nature of their visits.

But the inner counting-house, or, as it was even then called, Sir Watkin's room, was a *sanctum*, to which no person, on any pretence, was ever suffered to have access, save in the presence of the great high-priest of the secret temple himself—Mr. Obadiah Slee, who, ever since the decease of Sir Watkin, was the sovereign ruler

of the whole concern, assisted, and in some degree controlled, as before said, by the trustees, Smith and Jenkins.

On Obadiah Slee, therefore, did the boy Gregory fix his vigilant, minute, and constant observation. His grace and favour were so obviously necessary to a successful progress in the voyage of discovery on which the young adventurer had embarked, that he studied day and night how to ingratiate himself into the notice of this important personage.

It was by no means a difficult task to please the simple-minded Obadiah Slee; but James found it impossible to excite him. Every body pleased him that attempted it; the difficulty was, to offend him, for he was as inoffensive and as unassuming as an infant. For two years James had had the privilege to enter the *sanc-tum*, regularly every morning, to place at the feet of Mr. Slee his well-shined shoes and highly-polished silver buckles; and many a time, when rheumatism glued the joints of Obadiah, had James even been permitted to fall upon his knees and buckle on those shoes; but not even an inch of a torn letter, or any other paper, could he there pick up—no book was left open, nor could all his servile arts extract one syllable



beyond the repetition of the same expression, "Thank you, James," from the taciturn lips of this true secret keeper.

Obadiah Slee was, indeed, a being of such extraordinary passiveness of mind, that his character will most probably be deemed by the majority of readers rather over-strained, even as a fancy-sketch, instead of a genuine portrait, accurately copied from an original of sixty years ago.

In the art and mystery of a drysalter, Obadiah was an adept; and the rant and rhapsodies of enthusiasm which he constantly heard from some of the earliest and most illiterate disciples of George Whitfield, he could, on occasion, echo, with a warmth of zeal, that was prodigious, in contrast with his taciturnity on all other subjects; but even this was truly "a zeal without knowledge." A babe could be scarcely less ignorant of the world.

In his early youth he was apprenticed to the father of the late Sir Watkin; and he had been ever since such a living fixture in the counting-house, for six days of the week, and such a constant attendant at the Tabernacle on the seventh, that it has been said, his acquaintance with the topography of London, in which he had lived all his life, was actually confined to the

line of streets and alleys which then connected —Lane, in Fenchurch Street, with the new temple of Whitfield, in Moorfields.

The circumscribed routine of his daily avocations proceeded so monotonously, that his existence seemed more the effects of mechanism, than animation. The stated and regular performance of his counting-house duties resembled the automatical action of a piece of clock-work, being neither the consequence of reflection, nor the offspring of feelings; for he moved through the various stages of life almost as passively and mechanically, as the hands of a clock traverse the dial-plate, each movement merely marking the departure of minute after minute and hour after hour, till at length the wheels stop, and the vibration of the pendulum ceases for ever !

Upon such a passionless being as this, the manœuvrer tries his art in vain. Thus every new experiment of James, to ingratiate himself into the favour of Slee, was only a fresh failure; and he was, consequently, almost tempted to despair of ever rising from his lowly level.

Nor was the apathy of Obadiah Slee the only trial with which his perseverance had to buffet; for though he continued to gain ground daily in the good graces of Mrs. Macfarlane, of Dum-

fries, and, through her partial praises, with Lady Williams herself, yet the persecutions which the choleric temper and inveterate antipathies of the Welsh footman, inflicted upon the Scotch beggar, as (out of the housekeeper's hearing) Peter constantly called him, were such as none but a determined Scot could bear. His frequent reward for cleaning the tyrant's shoes, was to have them thrown at his own head ; and kicks and blows, taunts, ignominies, and insults, were the daily and hourly trials of his patience, meekness, and humility.

Was it because the Caledonian saw with the eye of faith the day of retribution near at hand, that with the spirit of a spaniel, rather than a martyr, he was enabled, not only to endure the pain, but actually to lick the dust from off the Cambrian's feet which kicked him ! Then never hereafter be it asked, " Oh, who can bear a fire in his hand by thinking on the frosty Caucasus."

Be this, however, as it may, whether foreseen or not by Gregory, his day of triumph came. When little more than three years of this probationary state had rolled away, the hopeful heir of the deceased Sir Watkin arrived from Aberdeen, where his lady mother had deemed it proper he should complete his education.

Up to the period of his father's death, this young man had been treated, according to the policy of the alderman, as a subject of the nursery. He was a stripling of slender frame, and still more slender intellects, and having formerly been treated too much like an infant by his father, was now, by his foolishly fond mother, raised all at once, as far as she was able, to the state of man and master.

Sir Watkin's will so far stood in the way of the young man's ruin, that it prevented him from seizing the reins of business at the age of twenty, by continuing all the power in the hands of Mr. Slee and his co-trustees for five years longer. This term, it was intended by the late alderman, should be passed under the surveillance and the instruction of the faithful and pious Slee; but alas, vain would have proved the efforts of abler men than Obadiah to mould a spoiled boy into a steady man of business, or to preserve a youth, whose mean ambition it was to be the chief of low companions in the pursuit of vulgar pleasures, in that track which his dying father had pointed out to him as the road to wealth.

Now began the triumph of the Scotch errand boy over the Welsh footman. The indulgent

Lady Williams, doating on her darling boy, became the dupe of her fondness, and grew totally blind and deaf, except as her dear Watkin lent her his eyes, and as his tongue found its way to her ears. Hence she saw nothing but cruelty and the ruin of his health in the necessary restraints Obadiah attempted to put upon his pleasures by requiring his attention in the counting-house, and accordingly encouraged the idle youth in his rejection of the wholesome councils of Mr. Slee, palliated his absences from business, and finally acquiesced in his open rebellion to the authority of his father's trustees.

This opposition to the dominion of Slee raised a feud in the household, and whilst the honest, though choleric Peter, true to the best interests of his young master, and faithful to his old master's old and tried friend Obadiah, stuck closely to him, Scotch James paid his court with success to the "Rising Sun." Peter told the truth to his lady, that Mr. Watkin was going on at a sad rate, and confirmed the complaints of Obadiah.—James lied to the lady mother in excuse of his young master most scientifically—listened occasionally at the door of the *sanctum*, and reported what he heard at meetings of trustees to Mr. Watkin, and added now and then, for pur-

poses of his own, a vast deal of slander never uttered.

In a short time, Mr. Watkin discovered, and reported to his mother, that Providence had sent to the house of Williams and Co. a prodigy in the person of the errand-boy; he had taught himself (so he gave out) to read and write, and cast accounts; he had detected more than once mistakes of careless clerks in wrong adding of bills of parcels, of which he had the delivery; and, in short, the son so puffed off Gregory to the mother, that the good lady took the deepest blame and shame upon herself that the talents and the piety of such a lad, so providentially directed to her care, had been suffered to remain so long unnoticed and so inadequately rewarded.

Oh, what a bitter pill it was for Peter Price to swallow, when the day arrived, that after much debate with Obadiah and the co-trustees, the Lady Williams and her son carried it against the one dissentient voice of Mr. Slee, that James Gregory should be immediately elevated from the warehouse to the counting-house—be regularly installed a clerk with other clerks—dine at the clerks' table, where Obadiah constantly presided, and oh! gall, oh! wormwood to the

Welchman's pride, where Peter waited ! It is said, we hope not truly, or, if true, we must believe that Peter's wish came only from his testy tongue, not from his honest heart, but it is said, that Mrs. Macfarlane, of Dumfries, heard Peter say, he wished that the first bit of bread he was compelled to hand to James would stick in the " Scotch beggar's " throat and choke him.

Alas ! poor Peter, this was but the puncture of a pin's point upon thy little finger, compared with the dagger-wound that was then in preparation for thy pride !

CHAPTER VIII.

HYPOCRISY ENTHRALLED BY CUNNING.

THE elevation Gregory had thus attained though extraordinary, was not so marvellous, or altogether so unprecedented an affair as to excite much wonder, or create much jealousy, except in the breast of Peter Price. But still it was an elevation that instantly enabled Gregory himself to see clearly that but a few steps more would conduct him to the summit on which Obadiah now stood in apathetic security, unsuspecting of the approach of any rival.

James Gregory was the very opposite character to that of the blind and passive Slee.

When Gregory had passed only about seven years under the same roof, where Slee had slept away almost half a century, the former had become a man of the world at twenty, whilst the latter was still a child at sixty-three. In these few years the ever active mind of Gregory had made and registered a thousand observations on the ways of men, from a view of the very scenes and characters which Slee had gazed upon with complete vacuity of thought.

To the acute observation and calculating mind of Gregory, his fellow servants in the kitchen, his fellow porters in the warehouse, his fellow clerks in the counting-house (as he gradually ascended to these fellowships), the different customers on business, the various visitors to Lady Williams, the motley congregations at the Tabernacle, the very passengers in the streets, and still more, the public newspapers, to Gregory all these materials for thought presented perpetual lessons of instruction in the study of mankind; but which lessons, though equally open to them both, the hood-winked Slee had never read or seen.

Among all these various characters upon which even at this period of his life Gregory had begun to exercise his skill as a discoverer of motives under their several masks, he had been

peculiarly struck with an individual whose portrait it is not possible to draw without some degree of hesitation and pain, inasmuch as unmasking religious hypocrisy, may to weak minds seem lessening the influence of religion, though there can scarcely be a more absurd or more pernicious doctrine.

Ezekiel Jenkins was the name of this hypocrite of the worst species. Apprenticed by poor but honest parents to a printer in a provincial town, he became idle, dissipated, and, according to his own declaration, in every sense depraved. At the age of eighteen he ran away, joined a company of strolling players, and pursued with more than common hardihood a career of wickedness. His self-told tale, published and sold at his own chapel, went on to say that he was miraculously converted to the then new sect of Whitfieldite methodists, and changed, in consequence, the scene of his theatrical exertions from the floor of a barn to temporary tub pulpits in open fields and market-places. His talents, joined to impudence unparalleled, made him popular with the vulgar; and in a short period the multiplied contributions of even a very poor class of followers enabled him to enter into a contract with a carpenter and bricklayer for the erection of a chapel

in the suburbs of the metropolis, called his chapel, but in the profits of which all three shared.

It happened in the mutations of property in this changeable world, that the two-thirds of this chapel belonging to the sleeping partners, by some means or other got into the possession of Alderman Williams, whose family had been dissenters for a century, but not methodists till the days of Sir Watkin, who was thus made a partner with Ezekiel Jenkins.

We are now getting on tender ground ; and shall skip over it as lightly, and as swiftly, as our duty to our readers will permit.

What a sinner Saint Ezekiel had been, he himself trumpeted forth to the world ; and it seemed as if the former blackness of the black-amoor could scarcely be depicted sufficiently black by himself, in contrast, perhaps, to his apparent purity, since he was so miraculously washed white. In truth, Ezekiel was no common man. Nature had endowed him with genius—circumstances had opened for it a field, and taught him its power ; and he employed it in bowing down the minds of thousands of his fellow-creatures to obey him like slaves. He was master of a remarkably original and bold,

bút vulgar and coarse style of eloquence ; which bewildered and enraptured, consoled and intimidated the poor and uneducated congregations—to which it was peculiarly adapted with a success scarcely inferior to that of Whitfield himself, though it was totally deficient in that quality, which it is generally allowed animated the orations of Whitfield—sincerity !

But we shall desist from any deeper anatomy of such a daring character, and present the impostor, as he walked abroad among his fellow-men ! His heart he constantly concealed by draperies, studied to entrap the multitude—never entirely disclosed it to a single fellow-creature—rarely, even in part, revealing his real thoughts, and then only for selfish purposes, to a very, very few of the most discreet among his followers. One of these very few was the late Sir Watkin Williams ; whilst among the multitude were Lady Williams and her son, and Obadiah Slee. It is enough on this point to say, that Sir Watkin, one of the easiest men in the world, was so deceived as to take the self-disclosure of about three quarters of Ezekiel's heart, (when he owned certain scruples of dissent from the doctrine he taught,) for a view of the whole. He considered him one of the most liberal

mined and most philanthropic of human beings, uniting integrity with strength of understanding; one who, according to his own account, preached entirely from a wish to awe the lower classes into moral conduct; and therefore the Knight was not happy till Jenkins consented to become a co-trustee with Slee and Smith, for his son's interest in the important secret of his trade.

It was in this character of trustee, it must be remembered, that Ezekiel Jenkins, two years after the alderman's death, first presented himself to the raw errand-boy, James; who had, ever since, most curiously watched the conduct and profoundly studied the character of the arch hypocrite. A constant guest at the house of Lady Williams, both before and after the return of her son, and the elevation of Gregory, the young Scot had sufficient opportunities of comparing the man with the preacher; and the discrepancies which he thus detected between the plain, pure, benevolent and self-denying doctrines and precepts of the divine Founder of Christianity, and the arrogance, sophistry, self-indulgence, and even sordid avarice, which characterized Ezekiel Jenkins, were not overlooked or forgotten by the calculating detector. But the naked mind of this hypocrite would, per-

haps, never have been laid open to him, in all its actual deformity, if the partiality of young Mr. Watkin Williams for his protégé, the new raised clerk, had not, at length, grown into the warmest and most confidential friendship.

In consequence of this friendship, much to the joy and satisfaction of Mrs. Macfarlane, of Dumfries, but greatly to the horror and chagrin of Peter Price and Obadiah Slee, Mr. Gregory (for so the quondam Scotch errand-boy was now called) was from every Saturday night to every Monday morn, in the summer time, the guest of Lady Williams, and the companion of her son, at what was called the country box of her ladyship on Clapham Common; in the neighbourhood of which a small meeting or tabernacle had been erected, under the auspices of the late Sir Watkin, for a congregation, to whom Lady Williams continued her patronage, and countenanced by her regular attendance.

At this country box Ezekiel Jenkins also frequently passed a few days. And now a sketch of a single scene (at the *soirée* of a London grocer's lady) must serve to tell a tale of scandal, which, in the autumn of 1771, (when young Watkin was about twenty-four, Gregory

not quite nineteen, and Ezekiel Jenkins sixty-four,) was canvassed at every tea-table round Clapham Common.

“Pray, Ma’am, have you heard of this affair that’s happened in pious Lady Williams’s establishment?”

“Oh, yes, Ma’am, it’s quite shocking! I think if I had a young and graceless son at home,—(thank God I’ve no children!) one fond of such low company as they say this young Williams is—one of your pigeon-shooters—rowing and sailing all day long—hail fellows with the Chelsea watermen it seems—seen drinking porter with them out of pewter pots, and even chucking pot-girls under the chin at public-houses, so they say, God knows it may or may not be true, but this I say, and will say, that where such scape-grace boys, without a father’s eye to watch them, have the whole run of a house up stairs and down stairs, I would take care what sort of girls I hired.”

“It is a mother’s duty so to do, Ma’am—aye, and a wife’s as well. I hate to see young creatures in service dressed up as one sees them now a-days.”

“And so do I, Ma’am. Pray, was this creature very handsome?”

"I think her rather so—tall and slim—dark eyes and hair—a neck, but that to be sure she could not help, fitter for a duchess than a housemaid; the hussey might have covered it indeed much more becomingly, for I have seen her at meeting on a Sunday with only a very thin muslin handkerchief, Ma'am, I assure you."

"At meeting! Did the creature sit under the word! What is the world come to!"

"What, indeed, dear ladies!" says a third tongue. "I perceive you're talking of this sad affair at Lady Williams's. The wicked wretch! What base ingratitude—a poor, starving beggar taken into the house out of the streets—like as one may say the adder in the poor man's bosom—no sooner warmed, you know, than it stings its benefactor. They say he is but about nineteen."

"O yes—young Williams must be older by some years."

"True, Ma'am, but not this Scotch lad, this Gregory."

"Gregory—nonsense, Miss Jones—it is young Williams."

"I beg your pardon, dear Mrs. Bateman, it is the still younger Gregory."

"Excuse me—I am told, on good authority, it is young Williams."

"You are misinformed, depend on it, Ma'am ; I say young Gregory."

"I know the young fellow has been a good deal here this summer, to be sure, Miss Jones."

"A small lump of sugar, if you please, Mrs. Bateman," says a fourth tongue ; "and now, ladies, give me leave to tell you, that having seen a few more years in this world than either of you, I—I recommend—(a little more cream, Mrs. Bateman)—I recommend you not to take all you hear on these occasions for gospel truth, nor to believe even what such creatures swear. I've known the world, as I say, longer than either of you, and in a case like this, where a wanton creature has been in a house with several men—"

"Oh fie, Mrs. Wigginton ! how you talk.—But who, except indeed sometimes poor Mr. Obadiah Slee, a pattern of piety, and old Peter, the Welsh footman—"

"And they are men, young ladies, titter as you please ; and you forget one more.—Now you know, Mrs. Bateman, I have always told you honestly my mind, and you, too, Miss Jones—I don't like these Whitfieldites—I never did,

and never shall—excuse me, you know I'm old blunt Peggy Wigginton—I speak my mind—I may be wrong—but I have got my eyes yet, and can see without spectacles at seventy-two, and I must say, there's something I don't like in the over-sanctified looks of—I won't say who, but we've heard of wolves in sheep's clothing—”

Here all the other ladies in the room lifted up their hands and eyes, and a general consternation seized the whole party; some opening the windows to let in fresh air—some fanning themselves—some coughing—some rattling their tea-cups and saucers. Here an exclamation, “How shocking!” there, “Too bad!” One shrugging her shoulders, and shaking her ruffles, saying “She's getting too old to visit,” whilst another discharges her fingers of snuff—taps the lid of her box, and declares, “I shall never ask such a scandalous old creature again.” In the midst of which din, the blunt Mrs. Wigginton vanished to her chair in waiting, leaving her eccentric character behind her, which furnished a rich feast of scandal for the rest of the evening.

In connection with this scene, let this hint be taken. The silly son of Lady Williams at

this very time was actually held responsible to the parish officers for the maintenance of an anticipated illegitimate child, of one Betsy Davis, a servant in the household of his mother. A letter, from Betsy to Ezekiel Jenkins, written two days before the unfortunate girl died, in giving birth to a still-born infant, was, in no very honourable way, intercepted, opened, and read, by James Gregory ; which letter afforded indubitable, and almost legal proof, that her first seducer was the hypocrite Ezekiel, in whose service she had formerly lived.

When Gregory was sure that death had sealed for ever the lips of the writer, he destroyed the letter which he had undertaken to deliver into Jenkins's own hand. This promise he had made the day before, but, on perusing the contents, he was puzzled in what way to let the hypocrite know that he was the master of such a secret, without, at the same time, confessing himself a villain. The poor girl's death, however, left him at liberty to tell any tale he pleased, and in his own way, without fear of contradiction.

Gregory felt the full weight of the chain he was thus enabled to throw over the "EVIL

SPIRIT " that had fallen into his toils, making him, for ever, the obedient, the abject instrument of his own future purposes. They met the following day at Clapham, and Gregory led Jenkins to a summer-house at the bottom of the garden, for they were already, in some degree, confidential, the latter having perceived the rapidly-increasing influence which the talents and address of the handsome young Scot had obtained for him, not only over the weak and giddy son, but the discreet and pious mother.

" This poor creature's death is a melancholy, an awful catastrophe, Mr. Gregory. Pray, where is Mr. Williams? We must try if such a striking warning cannot be made the means of drawing our giddy, heedless young friend to seriousness, and a proper sense of his dangerous condition."

As Jenkins uttered these hypocritical sentences, he perceived from the countenance of Gregory that his heart harboured some sentiment foreign to that feeling of reverence which he was accustomed to command from all his auditors; and when, after he had concluded, Gregory still remained silent, and still fixed his full blue eyes on the hypocrite, he could not help slightly trembling, though he knew not exactly why. He rallied, however, and asked—

“ Is Mr. Williams in the house ? ”

Instead of answering the question, Gregory, with a firmness and solemnity that astonished almost as much as terrified the guilty Jenkins, said, “ What will the world think of the man who could so abuse the power which his superior station as her master gave him over a poor inexperienced, unsuspecting girl, an orphan, a dependent, and under the protection of his roof ? I fear that among his fellow creatures he will have many cruel judges, who, forgetting their own frailties, will not hesitate to stigmatize the perpetrator of a crime, of which the consequence has been her death, as a murderer.”

Ezekiel started.

“ Murderer ! ” he exclaimed. “ Nay, nay ; that is going too far. Mankind are ready enough, I grant, Sir, to magnify the failings of their neighbours, overlooking, as you observe, their own ; but in this case your friendship has sounded an unnecessary alarm. Nobody can possibly couple the name of Mr. Williams with such a horrid charge as murder.”

“ I was not thinking of Watkin Williams, when I used that word.”

“ Who then ? ” said the alarmed criminal.

“ The seducer of the deceased young woman, the first despoiler.”

“ What mean you? You speak darkly. Do you know more than I do? Is any other person implicated, besides—before Mr. Williams? Is not he the seducer, the despoiler? Did not the young woman charge him, on her oath?”

“ Stop, Mr. Jenkins; the deceased never charged Mr. Williams with administering drugs to overpower her senses. Reflect, Sir, recollect yourself. I do not know more than you do; but I know that Watkin Williams was not the seducer, was not the first despoiler of that unfortunate young creature, whose death will nevertheless be laid to his charge; whilst the real murd—the actual seducer—I mean—”

“ Is who?—is who? Speak—speak, at once! If you know, speak, my dear, dear friend, if, indeed, you know; or if you do but guess, perhaps, from some loose hints, torture me no longer with this horrible suspense, but say whom you suspect—”

“ No, Mr. Jenkins, no; never shall my lips disclose to any living being a secret on which the hand of death has fixed an everlasting seal, to all but me. Whatever word be used to characterize the accident which placed

in my hands a letter, written by the deceased the day before her death, intended for the eye of Lady Williams, and containing a full disclosure of the desperate means by which her senses were overpowered and her ruin was effected, with the name of her despoiler; let the interception of that letter be designated vice or virtue, I did intercept it. Be it for good or ill, the act is over; the letter is totally annihilated; and though its contents, seen by my eyes alone, must live in my memory, yet never—never—never shall the secret escape these lips, so help me God!"

The feelings of Ezekiel, during the early part of this scene, are indescribable. Surprise and horror, at detection: pride, humbled in a moment to the dust; shame burning and fear freezing his frame, alternately; his heart now swelling with rage, and prompting him, like another Bajazet, to threaten and resist his youthful conqueror, even in defiance of the worse than iron cage in which he felt himself a captive; and now again fainting, from excess of that high-wrought anxiety, on which hung a slender hope that he might escape exposure; accompanied, however, by doubts that more than half-bent his trembling knees, in abject supplication, to the mere boy, on

whose lips hung the important sentence which was to send him forth, instantly, to the world's gaze, in all the hideous deformity of his real character, or to grant him, during pleasure, the further use of that saintly mask, which had so long deceived so many. His tongue, cleaving to the roof of his mouth, refused utterance to his agonized feelings; but his countenance, varying with his hopes and fears, spoke volumes; and when at length the voluntary oath of secrecy was pronounced by Gregory, with an energy that carried a conviction of its sincerity to the almost despairing heart of the hypocrite, he rose from his seat, seized the right hand of Gregory, pressed it with ardour between both his own, and looking unutterable thanks, he bowed down his head, till his lips touched the hand he held, and the homage of his gratitude, at the moment, was little less than adoration.

The young Scot felt his triumph, and saw his power.

Napoleon himself, however, never concealed a triumph, or used a power, placed suddenly in his hands, by fortune, force, or fraud, with more consummate skill, than did this juvenile politician, who, under the mask of apparent liberality and seeming humility, unsuspectedly ma-

tured his schemes of selfishness and ambition. He calculated, in a moment, how much was to be made of the influence and co-operation of Jenkins, in his false character, whilst, by unmasking the hypocrite, he was aware he sacrificed a powerful auxiliary, and, in return, gained nothing. "He will not serve me less effectively because he fears me, if I can moderate the hate which fear, in some degree, inevitably begets. Fate has irrevocably made him my slave ; my aim must be, to make his chains invisible to all eyes but his own, and so deport myself hereafter, as if the services, he dare not but perform, were considered by me as voluntary acts of grace and favour, for which I am most grateful."

These were not Gregory's words, but they exactly expressed his Machiavelian thoughts ; though how they became his we know not, unless they were begotten by the union of natural cunning with keen observation ; for Bonaparte's political clemency to conquered kings was a lesson to times much subsequent to those of which we are now speaking, and of which Machiavel Gregory had then never heard.

Such being the characters of this pair, and such their relative situations, it is sufficient to add, that in their further progress through

life, they perfectly understood each other ; and our next scene will display one of the earliest results of their combined operations for their own mutual advantages, at the expense of others.

CHAPTER IX.

THE WIDOW BEWITCHED, OR THE MAN TURNED
MASTER.

It was not till the eighth anniversary of that memorable day when Gregory, barefooted, had descended the area-steps into the kitchen of Lady Williams, that this skilful architect of his own "greatness" was enabled, by the success of all his different combinations and contrivances, to throw off entirely the yoke of servitude, and openly assume the character of master.

On to that very day, modesty and humility had marked his dress, his speech, and manners ; but on that important morning, when, at the hour of breakfast, he joined his fellow-clerks,

assembled, with Obadiah Slee, as usual, "in the chair," oh, what a contrast to their wondering eyes did the appearance of the full-dressed, handsome Mr. Gregory present, to the half-starved and naked beggar boy, whom, on that very day, eight years ago, the proud Welsh footman had almost kicked into the kitchen.

His red hair was completely whitened by a profusion of violet-scented powder, and dressed in the very highest style of the then London fashion. He wore a new pompadour coat, with cut steel buttons; his full French cambric frill, of ample breadth, protruded from a white satin waistcoat, with embroidered borders and pocket-flaps; his shining satin shorts, (pantaloon and trousers were then unknown,) fastened at the knees by oval buckles of sparkling Bristol stones, were black as jet; whilst his legs were clad in silken hose, as white as snow, and his toes were literally loaded with ponderous silver buckles of enormous size.

Certain whispers, originating with Mrs. Macfarlane, of Dumfries, which had been buzzed about the house for some time past, added to the increasing friendship of Mr. Watkin, and the evident favour of the lady mother, the homage of Ezekiel Jenkins, together with

the frequent and lengthened visitings to Clapham—all these symptoms had, in a great measure, prepared his fellow-clerks for Gregory's elevation over their own heads; whilst the individual, most affected by it, Obadiah Slee, had not even a suspicion of an event which had been long in progress under his own eyes.

The breakfast passed in silent wonder. Not one syllable could Obadiah bring forth; but every now and then he directed a glance of amazement towards a large chimney looking-glass, which reflected Gregory's image, clad, as described, in the gay costume of a city beau, in 1773.

So unsuspecting was the simple being, whose power had been thus imperceptibly, but effectually, undermined, so totally unsusceptible of jealousy was his easy disposition, that never till that moment had even the possibility of his having to encounter a rival for the throne he had so long filled, ever presented itself to his torpid mind; and never once had he dreamed of a competitor for the favour of Lady Williams, in the person of the Scotch errand-boy. Now, however, for the first time, the idea struck upon his brain, with the quickness of lightning, and he sat on thorns, till the withdrawing of the other clerks gave him an opportunity of address-

ing Gregory on the subject of his new-born fears.

“ May I inquire, Mr. Gregory, wherefore such unusual pains have been bestowed this morning on the adornment of the outward man—why this gaudy decking out of a poor, perishing tenement of clay ?” said Slee.

“ I have an appointment with a fair lady, Mr. Slee, to-day,” was Gregory’s reply, as he rose from his chair to quit the room.

“ Hold one moment,” said the still more and more awakened Obadiah ; “ you’re going, I presume, to Clapham. Pray sit down one moment, young man, and listen to a warning voice. It is commanded to me to tell thee that Satan is preparing a great snare for thy young and, I now fear, carnal mind. He is whispering lying vanities in thy too willing ear. He tells thee that thy benefactress has directed looks of more than common favour towards thee ; yea, the arch-fiend has conjured up vain and presumptuous imaginations in thy corrupt heart ; but oh, young man, beware, and listen not to the lying voice of the grand deceiver. He leadeth thee to temptations ; to dress above thy station—which will beget expences followed by crime—for that which thou hopest will never come to

pass. Verily, verily, I tell thee such things are impossible—they can never, never, never, come to pass !”

Here Obadiah paused—Gregory was dumb. For a few moments, Mr. Slee was also mute with astonishment at the unperturbed looks and closed lips of the cautious Scot, and stared at him in silence : until at length, his wonder increasing, and his patience diminishing, he was moved to ask, with even a spark of warmth,—“ Am I not worthy of any answer, pray, young man ?”

“ I was not aware, Sir, that you had asked me a question,” was the pert reply.

“ I have endeavoured to admonish thee. You will not pretend to tell me, James Gregory, that you do not understand my words.”

“ No, Mr. Slee,” said Gregory, with new-born dignity, having now decided on the course of his reply to this unexpected appeal of Obadiah.

“ No, Mr. Slee, I will not affect ignorance of your meaning, nor can I, Sir, considering your motives, your years, and the relative situation in which we have hitherto stood to each other, be in the least offended at the liberty you have taken, though you have spoken under very erroneous impressions. I ought, perhaps, under

all circumstances, even to thank you, Sir, for the unasked admonition you have been pleased to give me; but I must at the same time beg leave to say, that however I may be inclined to treat with respect and gratitude any hints your experience as a man of business enables you to bestow upon a so much younger man, I really can put no faith in you as a prophet after the palpable failure to which you have exposed yourself. Know, Sir," continued he, with a smile, "that the impossible event which you have just declared 'can never, never, never come to pass,' is about to take place this very day. Seriously and frankly, Mr. Slee, the period is now arrived when it becomes necessary, for many reasons, that you should be made acquainted with those alterations and future arrangements which are contemplated by myself and that most excellent lady, to whom a gracious Providence saw fit in his goodness, almost by a miracle, to direct my wandering steps."

"'Event!' 'this day!' 'alterations!' 'arrangements!'" exclaimed the electrified Obadiah, starting from his seat, with his hair on end—his spread hands raised high above his head, whilst his leaden eyes moved up and down, something like those of a dead ox galvanized.

“Where am I—where have I been! Alterations! alterations!” repeated he, “Oh, the marvellous stratagems of Satan! Who could have imagined—Tell me the worst at once—Marri—Yet, hold—the word would kill me—no, tell it not in Gath—no, boy, no, it is impossible. You who, but as yesterday, she in charity took naked from the streets, and she, the widow of Alderman Sir Watkin Williams—you, even now a stripling but just of age, and she, the mother of a man of five-and-twenty! Alas! alas! what will that good man Mr. Jenkins say—what will the whole congregation say of my poor dear Sir Watkin’s widow!”

“That she is a woman!” said Grègory to himself, as he was coolly surveying the beauties of his own person and dress in the afore-mentioned looking-glass, over the chimney—whilst the excited Obadiah raved on—

“How can it have been brought to pass? What arts—what sly contrivances, unknown to me? but no—no—it is not, cannot be true. So long a widow—so discreet—so pious. It is impossible. Come now, tell me the truth, my good young man—tell me I mistook your silence—ease my distressed, my distracted mind—only say you are not married!”

“Your unusual warmth in speech and manner surprises me exceedingly, Mr. Slee. Why should my happiness make you so miserable? If, however, it affords you any satisfaction to be told that we are not yet married”——

“Not yet!—not yet!” interrupted Mr. Slee; who now seemed to be actually agitated by human feelings, and excited for the first time since his birth. “Then, through mercy, it may not yet be too late to prevent this sad disgrace from falling on Sir Watkin’s widow. I will see Mr. Smith this moment—she respects him, as her son’s trustee; he surely will not suffer my dear lady to throw herself away upon a beggar! I must see that pious man—dear Mr. Jenkins, also. It is impossible that good man, without whose prayers and counsels she has hitherto taken no step of the least consequence, will permit her to expose herself to the sneers of the ungodly, and, to say the least of it, the pity of the brethren among whom she has been so long a shining light, and a supporting pillar. And,——”

“Pray, Sir, let Mr. Jenkins speak for himself,” interrupted Gregory, rather quickly, whilst his cheek was still suffused with a deeper red than usually glowed there, as the word

‘beggar’ hung on his ear. “Let the trustees of Mr. Williams, and Mr. Williams himself, also express their own opinions, if you please, on this subject; which it is evident you, Sir, view with rather too much prejudice. I ought, indeed, to have remained dumb till they were here; I expect them every minute.”

“Expect who?” said Slee, more alarmed than ever.

“O, here they are!—the carriage is come!”

“Come—carriage—who—what?”—said Slee, and a mist seemed gathering round him; he felt as if seized with sickness. “Who’s come?—what carriage?” repeated he; and his knees shook.

“Lady Williams’s coach (as it is called this morning) is at the door,” said Gregory; but the parenthesis was whispered only to himself.

A thundering summons from the knocker hurried Obadiah to the window; from whence he viewed a sight as agonising to his heart, as was that which the weird sisters conjured to Macbeth’s vision in their cave, until torture made the Thane cry out—“I’ll see no more!”

First alighted, in unusually gay attire, Mr. trustee Smith, one of the most popular brewers of the day, being almost equally celebrated for

the strength of his porter—the violence of his zeal for Wilks and Liberty—and his equally violent enthusiasm as a follower and supporter of the no less popular Whitfield.

Second came, the reverend, as he was called, Ezekiel Jenkins, the bosom friend, or, more properly, the confessor of Obadiah Slee, over whose simple mind he exercised the most despotic and unbounded sway.

Next appeared, also full dressed, Watkin Williams, Esq., (who had kept sober two days for this occasion,) and handed his mother from the carriage, dressed in bridal white, but with a quaker's neatness.

Obadiah, like Macbeth, would see no more. He turned from the window—the bridegroom elect had vanished—he tottered to a chair, faint and giddy—and ere the poor fellow had time to recover from such a sickening confirmation of the fears excited in his mind by Gregory, Ezekiel Jenkins stood in full masquerade before him.

The person of this hypocrite was, in size and shape, much nearer that of fat Father Paul, than of his lean lay brother; his gait was rather a waddle than a walk; his cheeks were bloated; and his dark, small, twinkling eyes, when seen,

were sufficiently indicative of a sensual and selfish mind : but they were almost always masked (as then) by a pair of most imposingly large green glass spectacles, with huge black rims, which were no less useful to him in his impudent inspections of the countenances of others, than in aiding him more effectually to disguise his own.

Such was the influence which this Protestant Pope—this tyrant over the consciences of his dupes, particularly exercised over the weak mind of Slee—that a word, a look from this worshipped oracle could at all times seduce or terrify, as the case might require, his trembling yet confiding victim into a blind surrender of his interests, his feelings, and his reason.

How this worse than wizard produced these wonderful effects, we will not shock the Christian reader by describing. The oration of Ezekiel to Obadiah, on this occasion, when he acquainted him, for the first time, that his own son, Ezekiel, junior, was that day to marry “Trustee” Smith’s only daughter—and Mr. Gregory, Lady Williams—and that he, Obadiah, was ejected from the new firm of Williams, Gregory and Jenkins, and to retire altogether on a pension—that oration, if accurately recited, would rival

in its impiety, the bullet-casting scene in 'Der Freischutz.' Nay, in fact, the blasphemous perversion of the Holy Scriptures, and the profane abuse of the priestly office by Ezekiel, are much more calculated to excite pain and horror in religious minds, than even the infernal incantations of avowed worshippers of Dæmons.

Passing over so horrible a scene, we will now follow the impious Enchanter and the "enchanted" Obadiah into the dining-room, where were assembled Mr. Williams, Mr. Gregory, Mr. Trustee Smith, and Mr. Jenkins, jun., Ezekiel's son, who were all looking over parchments at a table in the centre of the room. Poor Slee held out his hand to Gregory as he entered, who rose to meet him, and both retiring to a recess, after a deep-drawn sigh, "Ah, Mr. Gregory," said Obadiah, "we are poor, blind creatures—truly is it said, we know not what an hour may bring forth. Well, I can only say, with dear Mr. Jenkins, it is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes! To be sure, as that inspired man explains it, you are but an instrument to fulfil the decrees of Heaven, which we know must have gone forth from the beginning of the world. But be not too high-minded and puffed up with pride. Highly favoured and greatly gifted as

thou art, young brother, say not in thy heart, I James Gregory, have wrought all this ; for art thou not mere clay in the hands of the potter ! Oh reflect, poor weak vessel, that neither thy shape, nor the uses to which thou art ordained, are of thy own chusing. I spoke unadvisedly with my lips just now, reasoning and reckoning according to mere carnal views ; but our dear Mr. Jenkins has removed the film from my eyes, which were before blind as those of the bats who fly in darkness. Trust thou also, my young brother, in that inspired man, that spiritual guide, ‘ and he will make thy ways the ways of pleasantness, and all thy paths the paths of peace.’ ”

It required all the management of Gregory to listen with the requisite gravity to this address, which, in the sincerity of the speaker’s heart, was offered to him, and he rejoiced to see Mr. Smith approaching them, which saved a reply. The Brewer caught the word pleasantness, and said,—

“ True, Brother Slee, true—Mr. Gregory, and all of us have cause for thankfulness ; but you more than all, for you, I’m sure, may say that the lines are fallen to you in pleasant places. Could you yourself have formed, eight years

ago, such a plan as that which this day sets you free from the labouring oar, providing you with food convenient for you, neither poverty nor riches, but giving you competence for the body that perishes, with leisure to look after the welfare of your immortal soul!"

This was rather a *mal-à-propos* speech on the part of the brewer. It brought back again, even to the torpid mind of Slee, the ugly fact, that his consent had never once been asked until the whole scheme (about to be that moment executed) had been organized and approved by all the other parties.

"I wish not, I ought not to find fault with arrangements made under the eye and advice of dear Mr. Jenkins, and, therefore, no doubt sanctified to all parties; but, speaking in a worldly sense, I confess, that to the carnal eye of poor, weak human nature it did at first appear a little strange that I was not consulted till the very last moment upon matters in which—"

"Why, you must be aware, Brother Slee," interrupted the brewer, "that such a concern as this differs widely from those every-day trades or businesses which executors may publicly advertise to sell by auction, with leases and good-will attached to them. In our case, on the

contrary, absolute secrecy was absolute wisdom, and therefore it was, that under advice of Mr. Jenkins, till this the last hour did Mr. Gregory humbly take his seat with the rest of the clerks, and you have been spared the necessity of wearing a mask in the presence of your inferiors."

"Oh, Brother Slee! Brother Slee!" said the listening Ezekiel, as he came in front, with the fore-finger of his right hand held up, solemnly shaking his head, and fixing the full force of his huge green and black spectacles on the awe-struck Obadiah, until the poor creature dropped his chin upon his breast, and, passive as a child, suffered himself to be led by Ezekiel again into a corner.

"Oh, Brother Slee," repeated the hypocrite, "after all the pains I have taken to explain to you the weighty arguments which my worthy colleague and myself urged to persuade dear Lady Williams and our Brother Gregory to consent to this necessary secrecy—after all that passed between you and me, my beloved brother, so recently—after such a clear perception of your duty, and such a sweet frame of soul as was granted to you, it pains me sorely to find that Satan is again busy at work in that corrupt heart of thine. What now whis-

pers the foul fiend, my brother? which of the bad passions has the devil selected for his present game? Is it avarice, or is it envy? Art thou still questioning the will of him, who has seen fit to exalt the lowly, to raise a youth, whom in the pride of your heart you once perhaps despised, to rank and earthly honours far above thyself? Or does the lust of riches—the hungering and thirsting after filthy lucre harden thy heart against such a striking and gracious Providence as this arrangement, which unharnesses your soul from the cumbersome cares and goading anxiety of trade, leaving it free to seek and to improve the operations of grace without one worldly care?”

A tear or two actually started to the corners of the eyes of the admonished Obadiah, which he knuckled away as quickly as he could, and ventured to reply,—

“No, no, my dear Sir, I hope I am not in so lost a state as that. You know I have no love of filthy lucre—I care not for the profits or the honours of being at the head of this concern, but I fear the snares of the evil one in hours of idleness. If it could have been so managed, that I might have kept my old place at the desk without being in any body’s way, I hope it is

not sinful, but certainly as poor, dear Sir Alexander's father used to say, I should wish, God willing, ' to die in harness.' "

Here young Williams, who had drawn near enough to catch the last words of poor Slee, and who had been thus far patiently a silent auditor, could endure no more. His weak and volatile mind was fluttering with the anticipations of those " pleasures," which, on a wedding-day, are tolerated even in serious families. " Gentlemen, gentlemen," said the young spark, skipping up to them, with his watch in his hand, " there is really no time to lose. The lawyers are waiting to be called in, and it's all quite nonsense and stuff to be prosing so, when we have only got to sign and seal. As to old Mr. Slee's sticking himself any longer in the counting-house, that's quite out of the question, and impossible, and not to be talked about now. You see, Mr. Slee, things are very different now to what they used to be in grandfather's time. So come, gentlemen, let's call in the lawyers—sign and seal—and then for a jovial day once in our lives at least."

" Watkin Williams, my dear young friend," said Ezekiel, " this levity is indeed, ill-timed. I fear you never will be serious, if, on such a

momentous affair as this, you require to be reminded of the solemnity, the seriousness at least, which such occasions call for. You, Mr. Slee, I hope, will pardon him, and bear with his want of thought; he means no offence."

"I am no stranger to Mr. Williams's want of grace," said Obadiah, "want of thought, as you call it, and I now deeply lament his hardness of heart and spiritual darkness on his own account. May he be enlightened ere it be too late!"

"He has your prayers, we know, Brother Slee," said the arch-hypocrite; "he has all our prayers, but we must wait the Lord's own time. Had our young friend been all we could have wished," continued he, in a whisper, audible only to Slee, "he would not this day have had a step-father put over his head."

"Nor should I, in that case, have had a beggar-boy put over mine." This inference occurred to Slee by natural association, but he kept the rebellious thought to himself; and in the mean time, young Williams had called in the lawyers and their clerks, for whose appearance he had just before declared his impatience.

Lady Williams and Miss Smith, as far as they were parties, had already executed the

deeds, and after about half an hour's reading and commenting, the whole of the other parties interested were ready to sign and seal, drafts of the whole having been perused several days before by all excepting Slee.

The parchments were now spread in order on the table—the lighted taper was produced—the wax was melted, and each one in his turn subscribed his name and affixed his seal.

On this occasion an accident occurred, which, in its consequences, operated fatally upon the mind of Obadiah Slee; and is one of a thousand facts which shew by what a slight and momentary breeze, when unexpected, the mask of the most skilful and most careful of manœuvring hypocrites may be blown aside.

On the night before this important day, James Gregory committed to the flames a small collection of letters and other private papers which he had in his hitherto confined and humble station of life accumulated. One letter, however (a very flattering one), recently written to him by Ezekiel Jenkins, vanity, or some other feeling, prompted him to spare from the general destruction. It was a letter, that, for all the world, he would not willingly have permitted another eye to look upon; and more than once that night he

was about to destroy it, but was as often checked in the very act. Ultimately he resolved to deposit it in the morning in his desk in the common counting-house, until he should take possession of the *sanctum*.

Morning came, when having arrayed himself in his wedding-suit, and all the duties of the toilette over, his first care was to convey this letter to its place of safety. He was on his way to the counting-house, for this purpose, when Mrs. Macfarlane intercepted him on the stairs. This old friend of Gregory had just at that instant arrived from Clapham, and had some matters of detail to discuss with him, by command of her lady, on the proceedings of the day, in virtue of her office, as confidant; and Gregory, finding it totally impossible to evade a council so important, turned, with the overjoyed housekeeper, into her room, instead of proceeding to his desk in the counting-house.

The letter, which he still held in his hand, he doubled and redoubled, and made less and less in bulk, as he listened and replied to the housekeeper's tattle, until, being repeatedly summoned to the breakfast-room, he was compelled to repair thither, instead of the counting-house, when

suddenly it occurred to him, that this letter might lie very snugly, for the present, in the bottom of his watch-fob.

The genius that prompted that thought was certainly connected with the destiny of Obadiah Slee, and had decreed that a curious train of accidents, highly improbable to conceive, should actually bring into his hands a description of himself, such as he, of all men, ought never to have seen.

“ I will step down to my desk, after breakfast,” said Gregory to himself, as he thrust his gold watch (which, with its gold seals, was a present from his mistress) into his fob, upon the secreted letter. His unexpected detention by Mr. Slee, until the arrival of the carriage from Clapham, prevented his intended visit to the counting-house; and the interesting and important business that instantly took possession of his mind, entirely and completely obliterated for the moment, all recollection of the letter in the watch-fob.

Such was the order of fate so far. The next link in the chain which conveyed this letter from the hands of the writer to him of whom, but not for whom it was written, was this. When it came to the turn of Mr. Gregory to say, “ I

deliver this as my act and deed for the purposes within mentioned," he drew out his gold watch in order to apply his gold seal to the wax, and, in so doing, also came forth the crumpled letter from its prison, and fell, unseen by any mortal eye, upon the carpet, close to the toe of its unsuspecting gaoler, who, in re-locking the prison door, (that is, returning the watch) thought, if he thought on the subject at all, that the prisoner was still securely there. If the liberated letter had been suffered to lie quietly where it fell, some one perhaps might have espied it, and said, "Mr. Gregory, you have dropped a piece of paper." But another link of the chain prevented that, for Gregory's own toe, as he moved from the table, kicked the paper out of sight, some inch or two beyond or behind the corner of an old fashioned aldermanic, green cloth table-cover, which said corner, the table being oval, trailed upon the Turkey carpet, and completely screened the prison-breaker from pursuit.

At last it came to Obadiah's turn to sign and seal. Some feeble rays of the light of reason, some grains of common sense, still disquieted the head of this dupe of fanaticism, and had two or three times endeavoured to make their way to his heart: but his subdued blood was too

weak to sustain even this faint idea of resistance, as a duty he owed to himself,—it evaporated between the brain and the seat of courage, and he yielded up all his scruples in passive obedience to Ezekiel, who was at his post close to his elbow.

“ In many a doubtful path of thy pilgrimage, Brother Slee,” said the impious man, “ thou hast heretofore relied upon the answers I have received to my seekings on thy behalf, and has thy faith ever led thee astray? Now then mark me, never, never were such plain commands vouchsafed to me in answer to my searching for divine directions as in the step you are about to take. Sign then, my brother, I feel a full assurance that it will be sanctified to thee for good.”

In a state of the most painful perplexity, with an obscure mist before his eyes, and a deep undefined sorrow in his heart, Obadiah obeyed, and signed his abdication.

The lawyers now retired, the ladies were introduced, and smiles and congratulations, and shaking of hands went round, with the solitary exception of poor Slee, who took no pains to conceal how little he participated in the general joy:—and pleading indisposition, he firmly

declined the entreaties of even Lady Williams herself to mingle either in the ceremonies or the festivities of the day.

The hour fixed for the double nuptials had now arrived. The church was within a minute's walk—the friends invited were to assemble there, and from thence, immediately after the ceremony, carriages were to be in readiness to convey the several parties to a true citizen's feast, provided by Mr. Trustee Smith and Mr. Watkin Williams at a celebrated tavern on Richmond Hill.

CHAPTER X.

DEAD MEN TELL NO TALES.

ALL the dramatis personæ of this strange scene had now left the room, save only Obadiah Slee, who, seated on a chair, which happened to be opposite a portrait of the late Sir Watkin's father, was so exhausted by the violence of the struggles his mind had undergone, that he remained some minutes after the door closed upon his solitude, in a state of mental atrophy ; and his eyes wandered vacantly round and round the room. Presently, the striking resemblance of old Mr. Williams, his early friend, recalled his memory to its agonising task. The transactions of the last

hour now recurring in all their painful force, at first, seemed to his bewildered senses rather as the baseless fabric of a frightful vision, than a real scene, in which he had himself acted an important part. One painful thought was now rapidly followed by another, still more painful ; and strange conjectures begat appalling apprehensions, until his mind becoming too much agitated to permit his body to recline inactive, he arose from his seat, went to the window, retreated, paced the room with long and measured strides, tossed about his arms with violent gestures, totally at variance with his accustomed habits, uttering every now and then an ejaculation that expressed either some new wonder of his head, or some fresh sorrow of his heart, until at length he entered almost unconsciously on a long soliloquy.

“ James—the Scotch errand-boy—the master of this house—the chief of this great concern ! Can it be true ? Oh, my dear honoured master, (addressing the portrait,) if those eyes could see—and those ears hear—and those lips speak,—what would'st thou say to this ? A poor beggar of a boy—a Scotch beggar-boy—to be the successor of thy son, Sir Watkin, and married to his widow ! Ah, thou dear, dear friend of poor

Obadiah in his orphan state—guide of my youth—who placed me in that path of duty it has been my delight to tread even until now. And now—now, in my old age, I am supplanted—and by whom?—this upstart, this mere boy. And even that was not enough, it seems; that pert stripling, Ezekiel Jenkins, he, too, is to be put over old Obadiah's head! The Lord be merciful to me! But it is wonderful, that the son of that good man—it cannot be—no—but—my poor head is giddy—thoughts strange, and even sinful, come over me—thoughts that are slanderous.—Yet it is odd, that both of the trustees should, the one by his son, the other by his daughter, as it were, join partners with this Gregory! He is artful; but then they are pious men: one a holy—a most holy saint—a favoured prophet in Zion! Oh, Satan! Satan!—thou art busily at work with thy lying whispers! Away!—away! All is doubtless for the best: all in fit season will be explained, though now dark and mysterious.—Well, where am I to go?—where am I to go? Why was not I told some little time before? These are human, carnal thoughts, to be sure, as dear Mr. Jenkins truly says; and I must call to my aid those precious words he spoke to me this morning.

There was certainly great power given him at that time. He then quieted every fear, and put away all my doubts; my mind was then calm; but ever since, one thought or other—He—no—that saint can never have had an eye to filthy lucre! And Smith, too, is a godly, pious man. Gregory is—to all outward seeming—also—a pious youth—serious—steady—humble—hitherto, at least, humble—though I thought his looks this morning, when I wished to drop a word in season, were not quite so humble. Psha!—pscha!—these are wicked thoughts! Let me look on the other side, as dear Mr. Jenkins pointed it out this morning. Suppose this youth—this Gregory—had been as thoughtless, giddy, graceless, as the only son of our dear lady; he has such influence over him, that if Mr. Watkin had been put in possession of all the property, and all the power, Gregory might have still done as he pleased with him, and, I fear me, with poor dear Lady Williams also. Prodigality might, to be sure, have brought on ruin; and the disgrace of this house would have been a bitterer portion to me, in my old age, than to leave it as I do—so sorely against my will.”

A quiet minute or two followed this thought,

which was but a faint, very faint impression of the powerful picture drawn by the rough but strong and masterly pencil of Ezekiel in the morning. But soon again came the tormenting questions—If Gregory and my lady ruled, why was I not consulted—at least informed?—why could not I have remained a partner, or a manager?—and why call in the son of Ezekiel?

These were questions not to be satisfactorily answered according to human modes of reasoning; but only evaded by that species of spiritual mystification of which Jenkins was one of the cleverest practitioners that ever preyed on the credulity of weak minds. Had he been present to reply, Obadiah would have been duped again, for the ten hundredth time. But in his absence, these thoughts more and more perplexed the mind of Obadiah, until at length his brain became half phrenzied with the struggle between the resentment a natural and rational suspicion of dupery gave rise to, and the phantasmagoria, which at the same time rose to baffle each suspicious thought, by construing every doubt into a sin, suggested by the author of all evil.

In this feverish state of mind, poor Obadiah continued to walk the room until, in one of the

turns up and down, as he was endeavouring to quell the rebellion in his breast, by recollecting some sentences of Ezekiel about spurning the tempter from him, just as he passed the table on which he had signed his abdication, the thought of spurning was instinctively accompanied by an action of his right hand, applied to the said table, which rolling away an inch or two on its castors, instantly exposed the letter that Gregory had unconsciously dropped.

Perceiving a paper on the carpet, Obadiah gently moved it with his toe. He touched it in the same manner a second time; and then stooped and picked it up. He saw it was a letter—it was a letter in the well-known hand writing of Ezekiel Jenkins. He started! It was directed simply “James Gregory, Esq.” He trembled. It had been sealed, but the wax was broken. A cold tremour seized him, and the letter shook as he held it fearfully between his finger and thumb; whilst his feet felt as if fixed to the floor. Surprise, curiosity, fear—alternately overpowered him. The incidents of this day appeared magical. He was distracted by contradictory sensations; but the predominant feeling was an undefined fear. He apprehended some discovery inimical to his peace;

yet the desire to know more than either Gregory or Jenkins had thought fit to communicate was stronger than his dread to know the worst ; stronger too than the voice of conscience, which was far from silent. Remember who says "Thou shalt not steal," said conscience ; " and is it not robbery to steal the secrets of another ?" Then came a compromise—" I did not steal the letter ; it has come open into my hands." The chivalrous notions of honour that would have made this very circumstance an inviolable seal in the hands of a man of honour, poor Slee had no idea of. The commonest self-love was the only criterion by which his weak mind was governed : and in the present case, the desire of dishonourably stealing the contents of the letter that he had found (not stolen), was not sufficiently counteracted by a sense of future punishment to induce him to resist the temptation of its present gratification. Still he could not proceed as if he was about to do an act he had a right to do ; his head moved slowly right and left over his shoulders, and his eyes shrunk even from the paint and canvas ones of old Williams's portrait over the chimney-piece, whilst his trembling fingers were committing the petty larceny of picking, not another man's pocket, but his letter.

Poor Obadiah—what a thunderbolt were those fingers preparing to shatter thy hopes for ever ! He read :—

“MY DEAR SIR,

“ My son will deliver this into no hands but your own. I am sorry you troubled yourself to bring the bond this evening ; and again and again I must tell you, that you greatly overpay, as well as overpraise, my poor abilities. I should have deferred saying this till we met, if I did not feel it absolutely necessary, from one part of your note, to caution you, even at this almost the last moment of your probation, to continue circumspectly on your guard, to keep that poor creature, Slee, in perfect ignorance of our arrangements, till the very morning. I have reasons for this, which you, not being yet initiated into certain secrets, would not comprehend, if I were to confess them. One day or other we will laugh over them. On all the other points of our plan, as well as on the time and method of its execution, if ever we have differed, you know I have constantly yielded my judgment to yours, which, (my interest being concerned,) proves, that though the head attached to my shoulders be twice as old as that mounted upon

yours, I am convinced that the brightest brains are locked up in the last made cabinet, and that they are by much the fittest brains to be used for general purposes, nine times out of ten. I therefore can, with less violation of my modesty (of which I profess to have no superfluity) claim a superior judgment (the result of peculiar experience arising out of peculiar circumstances) in this one solitary section of our united operations, namely, the management of poor old Slee. With respect to our half-trusted confederate, Master Smith, you have proved to me, by the rules of arithmetic, that the chap is a rogue ; and you have also proved, that you know, much better than I, how to fish for rogues ; —what sorts of bait they will be sure to bite at ;—and what kind of agitation frightens them into deeper water. Accordingly I left the brewer to your net, and you caught him. With the booby squire and our lady, his mother, your mode of entanglement has also succeeded to admiration ; mine, which was the more cautious, perhaps might have failed. Here, again, you see, I preferred your brains to my own. The lady has certainly proved herself more susceptible alive to your merits than, at fifty, I calculated she could be ; and the young squire, it turns

out, is more in debt and nearer ruin, at twenty-five, than I could have thought possible. You saw clearer, in both these cases, than I did, and by your boldness, I confess, the game is all but won. Silly prodigals and their fond mammas, therefore, together with all the rogues, I consign for ever to your net; but the fools, by my prerogative, I claim for my prey. With all the others you have done well, but Slee, poor old Slee, is a very different subject to work upon; and I am sure if you had persisted in adopting a line of conduct towards that old simpleton, founded on your views of what he ought to consider was for his interest and ease, our whole scheme would have got wind prematurely, and then, to my knowledge, such an opposition would have started thereto, from more quarters than one, as would have defeated it, to a certainty. You must know that I have made the whole genus of fools my particular study, and more especially that species of fools in which I class Obadiah. The imbecility of Slee's mind is such, that argument is worse than useless. Fear, alone, is the director of such men's actions, and one is absolutely compelled to terrify them into an implicit and instantaneous adoption of the measures pointed out to them

from time to time, but which, of course, we take care shall be for the welfare of themselves and the benefit of society. To leave the choice of two paths to a mind such as Slee's, would be nearly the same act of cruelty as to cut the string by which the blind wanderer, in confident security, follows the cunning dog that leads him. For the poor creature's own sake, therefore, as well as on our account, believe me, it is necessary to wear, for two or three days more, the same mask which has hitherto so admirably concealed the designs of that ambition, which nature has implanted in your breast. Confide, then, in my promise and my power. On Thursday, at my bidding, rest assured, you shall see the seal and signature of Obadiah Slee to every skin of parchment where the law requires it, in order to consolidate the victory genius has obtained over dulness, and legalize and confirm the eagle's natural right to the treasure which his eye discovered, and his soaring wings shall bear away triumphantly from a nest of owls.

“ E. J.”

“ Mem : Dead men tell no tales. As soon, therefore, as this messenger has delivered safely over to your memory my thoughts, delay not a

moment the work of destruction, which nine times out of ten is the only sure method of preventing breach of confidence."

Such was the letter which, by a most extraordinary train of accidents, was thus placed in the hands of Obadiah Slee at that very moment, when, as we have stated,* "his brain was phrenzied with the struggle between the resentment—a natural and rational suspicion of dupery gave rise to—and the phantasmagoria, which at the same time rose to baffle each suspicious thought, by construing every doubt into a sin."

Like the lightning's flash, at the same moment it illumined and destroyed the brain. He read, and he was instantaneously enlightened.—But, alas! the light came too sudden, as well as too late. He attempted to read again—his eyeballs almost started from their sockets with straining agony—amazement first—then horror seized him. He felt not a single selfish pang. The pecuniary loss he sustained—all the worldly effects of such impious hypocrisy were totally annihilated from his memory by the horror of his soul at the hideous sight of the hypocrite unmasked. There

* Page 258.

were no longer torturing doubts of the sanctity and infallibility of that spiritual man—on whose breath his meek and simple spirit had reposed its hopes of everlasting peace, as one of the purest interpreters of the oracles of Heaven—no—these doubts were in an instant swept away. All doubts were vanished, and for ever; but in their stead arose a hideous reality, a being so exactly resembling the EVIL ONE in his desperate defiance of the Deity and his artful hypocrisy towards mankind, that the contemplation at once broke the heart and shattered the intellects of poor Obadiah Slee. Too weak for such a shock, it totally destroyed him.

Falling on his knees as he still held the fatal letter in his hand, he exclaimed, "O, Lord, save me—save me from this devil's snares. I have bowed down and worshipped Beelzebub, but I saw not his cloven foot. He came in thy holy name, clothed in the whitest garments, and he has robbed me of my soul."

His ideas now becoming more and more mingled and confused, the poor maniac—for such he was—rose again suddenly from his kneeling posture, and lifting his hands to his burning and throbbing temples, walked up and down the room uttering one frightful ejaculation after

another, totally unconscious of all the real and outward objects around him, seeing nothing but the distorted image of Ezekiel, which appeared to his diseased brain in the most horrid shapes. This feverish excitement was, however, of short duration. His brain suddenly became icy cold, a chilling tremor seized his frame, and his eyes became immovable. Whilst he was sitting in this state, with his back to the room door, it opened, and Peter Price, the Welch footman, entered. Peter had thrown off his livery, and was dressed in plain clothes. He had a bundle in one hand, and his hat in the other, and standing at the door said, "I beg pardon for intruding, Mr. Slee, Sir, but I could not find in my heart to go away without saying good bye to you, Sir, and wishing you health and happiness. God bless you, good bye, Mr. Slee."

No answer was made.

"I shall never set foot in this house again, Sir. No, Sir, I'll beg—I'll starve before ever I'll degrade myself to stand behind my dear master's coach again, now the Scotch beggar rides in his place. Mr. Slee—Sir—"

No answer still from poor Slee. The footman approached—he proceeded towards the front of the chair. His hat and his bundle fell from

his hands, at a spectre more terrifying than death. The poor maniac sat stiff in the chair—he held the open letter in one hand, the fore-finger of the other was placed on the centre of his chin—his eyes were fixed on the ground. He slowly raised them at the appearance of the footman, and seemed to look the trembling Peter full in the face, but his eyes were senseless as stone.

At that moment the sound of a carriage was followed by a loud knocking at the street-door. The maniac started up, and thrusting the letter into his bosom, ran into a corner of the room, whilst Peter as rapidly quitted it, without hat or bundle, and hurried to the door.

It was opened—and the impious author of this misery, Ezekiel himself, appeared. During the performance of the marriage ceremony, at the moment when all were kneeling around the rails of the altar, Gregory suddenly recollected the secreted letter for the first time since he had deposited it in his fob, and at the same instant he instinctively pressed his fingers to ascertain its safety. He was convinced it was not there—he recollected using his seal, and the thought that such a letter must then be lying in the very room where he had left Slea, so tortured him, that the confusion in which he continued with

difficulty to get through the rest of the ceremony, was visible to every one present, though none, save himself, he well knew, could conjecture the cause. There was only one course which, in so extraordinary a crisis, he could possibly adopt. Humiliating as was the necessity, he had no alternative but to confess to his confederate his double carelessness in failing to destroy, and then in losing a document so damnatory to both. With breathless anxiety he waited for the first moment of entering the vestry, and calling Ezekiel aside, in a few minutes that alarmed hypocrite was on the spot where we now describe him to be, whilst an excuse of some recollected business, invented by Gregory, was made for his abrupt departure, with an assurance that he would join the party at Richmond Hill in time for dinner.

Peter, astonished as he was at the return of Ezekiel, was still more so at his manner. Hurry and anxiety were strongly displayed—he rushed by the footman with as much rapidity as he was able, and without uttering a word, was halfway up stairs, ere the tongue of the terrified Peter could utter—“ Stop—stop, Mr. Jenkins—stop—stop, Sir, for God’s sake, stop !”

Ezekiel’s hurrying footsteps were arrested.

"What's the matter, Peter?"

"Oh, poor Mr. Slee! Poor Mr. Slee!"

"How? What of Mr. Slee?—Speak, man!"

Peter, in a few words, described the exact posture in which he found the maniac.

"A letter in his hand!" exclaimed the almost breathless Ezekiel, "are you sure it was a letter?"

"It looked like one—it was some sort of paper writing."

That this menial was not sure it was a letter, gave Ezekiel power to breathe again, for it was proof he knew not that it was the letter; and he proceeded with indescribable agitation to the dining-room, followed at a due distance by the trembling Peter.

On their entrance, they saw the unhappy man again seated in the very chair, and in precisely the same attitude, as that before described, except that the letter was crumpled up in his clenched hand.

Ezekiel stopped at the door. He motioned with his finger to Peter also to stand still. He then softly and cautiously approached nearer and nearer to the back of the chair. Just as he was about to pass it, the maniac rose slowly from the chair—his eye then turned on Ezekiel

—on him, he thought the Evil One! The poor creature shrieked—staggered—fell! The dart of death had struck him,—and that moment brought to his bruised and broken spirit a happy liberation from its mortal state—its passport to another and a better world.

The heart of Ezekiel, hardened as it was, for once shrunk appalled. He felt that this death-stroke, though not inflicted by his hands, was one of the consequences of his crimes; and whilst Peter was dispatched for aid, (now all in vain,) the self-accused wretch, with trembling fingers, clutched from the dead man's grasp the accursed letter, and hurried it into his own bosom, for concealment, with the same alarm and horror that the assassin secretes his dagger, the instrument and evidence of a more sanguinary, but not more atrocious murder.

This glaring testimony of as profound hypocrisy as ever deceived mankind, once more safe in his own possession, the sense of guilt grew lighter and lighter about the callous heart of the hypocrite, as his fears of its discovery by his fellow-creatures died away. Ere the alarm of Peter had brought a single creature to the room, Ezekiel Jenkins, in all outward appearances, was "himself again," and by the time

that the medical men arrived, he was as able as the most indifferent spectator to take his part in the chorus of common-place phrases always used on such occasions.

* When it was observed, that "Mr. Slee was an old man; that his habits had been so sedentary, apoplexy was not to be wondered at," and that "the surprise and excitement of the morning had probably hastened the effect of that disease of the brain," he said, "Certainly! no doubt," and, "to be sure, it must be so," as calmly as the doctors, Mrs. Macfarlane, or any other by-stander. But when it was remarked, by some gossip, "that it was an ominous event, to happen on a wedding-day;" when Peter (now a gentleman at large) went so far as to insinuate, pretty broadly, that poor Mr. Slee broke his heart, "to see such a wedding," and even attempted to enlarge on the horrors (in his eyes) of "Scotch ascendancy," brought about, as he hinted, by Scotch cunning and hypocrisy; when he boasted, with all the pride and ardour of a Welshman, that he would not stay in a place where, through Scotch impudence, "scum was now uppermost," Ezekiel undauntedly rebuked them for their rebellious and sinful railings against Providence, and dared

even to quote passage after passage from the scriptures, applicable to the awful event of sudden death.

With the privileges of the pulpit there is no contention. Silence or absence is the only alternative, be the doctrines ever so questionable, or the orator ever so unpopular. Peter, therefore, only lifted up his eyes in wonder, placed his hat on his head, took up his bundle, and retired, for ever, from an abode, contaminated, in his opinion, by the sovereignty of Gregory.

The doctors and their assistants soon after withdrew, and Ezekiel, consigning the care of the lifeless remains to Mrs. Macfarlane and the undertakers, set off to join his confederate, at Richmond Hill, and, literally, to carry to a bridegroom a letter recovered from the hands of the dead. The event, however, was concealed from the party assembled, and was not generally known till the following day.

In a very few days Obadiah Slee was buried, and in a few weeks forgotten. He died childless, friendless; no vestige of ancestry had marked his entrance into the world; no act of his life remained a monument of his transitory existence, or conducted the recollection of posterity to his tomb. Of him, as of many millions like him, how

truly it may be said, "Come like shadows, so depart."

Thus far, then, we have minutely and accurately described the secret movements by which a forlorn and destitute boy was, in the course of a few years, elevated to a rank and fortune so many degrees above his origin, as to excite the wonder and envy of all to whom that origin was known. To the large majority of lookers on, by whom the interior mechanism, the combined operations of those wheels within wheels, which put in motion that vast machine, *"The World,"* are never seen; to the innumerable spectators of this class, the rapid rise of James Gregory, extraordinary as it was, appeared to be only another happy illustration of "virtue rewarded by good fortune," similar to that of the celebrated Whittington, thrice lord mayor of London. Every one who had heard of Gregory, knew that he came a poor boy from Scotland; that he was patient and meek in the discharge of the humblest offices; that he was remarkable for acuteness, industry, sobriety, fidelity, and above all, for piety. Everybody, therefore, believed that these virtues and this piety, had obtained for him, and rendered him worthy of the hand and fortune of Lady Wil-

liams; but no one living (and dead men tell no tales) knew or suspected the operation of those fears or those bribes by which the arch hypocrite, Ezekiel, had been induced to throw into the scale of Gregory's merits, his own spiritual power over the consciences of others, without which, in all human probability, the patience and meekness, the industry, sobriety, and apparent piety of the young Scotchman, would not have enabled him, at least so soon, to have assumed the character of the rich and the great man, in which, as husband of the widow of Sir Watkin Williams, he now with universal applause appeared upon the stage of that world, where all the men and women, as we are told, are merely players.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PRODIGAL'S FATE ; OR, THE TRIUMPHS AND
TROPHIES OF AVARICE.

WITHIN the first year of her second marriage, the health of Lady Williams began visibly to decline ; and her malady was of that class to which no medical professor can afford relief. They " cannot minister to a mind diseased !" Two painful wounds were festering in her heart,—a husband's cold neglect—a son's impending ruin.

Young Williams, as Gregory had foreseen, very soon forfeited his share in the drug business by a breach of the articles of partnership. He continued to pursue an idle and dissolute course of life ; degrading himself, step by step, in the declivities of vice ; until, at length, unable

to keep up even the appearance of respectability; he sank into that irretrievable vortex, the companionship of low, dissipated tavern loungers, and callous-hearted blacklegs! Perpetual scrapes, the consequence of gaming in such society, begat habits of care-drowning intoxication; from the delirium of drunkenness his debilitated mind was awakened only to endure the stings of remorse; and there remained but one short stage between despair and suicide!

The species of gambling to which this unfortunate youth at last became addicted, Lottery Insurance,* though now happily almost obsolete, was of a more widely mischievous and more rapidly destructive nature, than any of the games known and practised even in this Crock-

* This species of gambling was annihilated by the plan of *short lotteries*, in pursuance of which *all the tickets were drawn* in one or two days! At the period of which we are speaking, and long afterwards, the drawing of the lottery occupied a month, and hundreds of offices were opened in all parts of the kingdom; where, by paying a shilling or eighteenpence in the early part of the drawing, the depositor was entitled to receive a guinea, if a certain chosen number of a ticket should be drawn out of the wheel the following day. The premium of course rose as less tickets remained in the wheel, but the gambling was continued till the very last day, and the stakes were varied according to the means of the gamblers.

ford age of gambling. It was then the "rage" among all ranks of people, and thousands, year after year, entered with purest innocence into this most fatal of all the roads to ruin ever invented; and were hurried on to the commission of frauds, thefts, and robberies; many to self-destruction; and not a few to murder.

The state of mind to which the desperate situation of her son had reduced the unhappy mother, was little short of madness. Her husband who, to the eyes of observers, seemed to conduct himself not only respectfully, but tenderly, was, in reality, the cruellest, by being the coldest, of domestic tyrants. There was no insolence of language or manner; there was no neglect of outward decorum; but a month had not passed over the fatal day when, with her whole fortune, she gave her hand to Gregory ere this ill-fated lady was convinced that the being on whom she had bestowed them was without a heart. She sickened at the discovery; she shuddered at the life-long tie which had condemned her to be a slave under the title of wife to a man of avarice.

It was scarcely an alleviation of the pangs which this disappointment occasioned to her wounded heart, that she was scorned and ne-

glected for gold, and not for superior beauty ; nor could she have suffered much more torment in the persuasion that some syren had robbed her of that heart, which she believed was her's alone, than she endured from the indubitable proofs each day of her unhappy life forced on her conviction—that her gold was not only the chief, but the sole object of Gregory's adoration.

Still more terrible even than this bitter conviction of his hypocrisy to her, was that of the more impious deceit, which she now too clearly saw he practised upon the world, in assuming a sanctity of form and manner, and in professing a zealous devotion to that pure religion which claims the heart, at the same time that his soul's whole and entire affection and devotion were absorbed by his love of gold, that ruling passion, which, in him, equally overpowered all love of his fellow-creatures, and all fear of God.

A second and a third year rolled on in a mournful monotony, offering no one bright speck of hope to cheer the perpetual gloom, which the chilling and blighting presence of the man without a heart inflicted on this unhappy woman, now far, far more desolate than in the days of her widowhood. The sorrows of her heart were rapidly consuming it; yet to no

mortal ear did she reveal them. Her wasting frame, sunk eyes, and faded cheeks, proclaimed indeed, aloud, her fast approaching dissolution; but no, friendly voice, no looks of sympathy soothed, for an instant, the sinking spirit of the disappointed and despairing mother—the deceived and neglected wife.

The vices of her degraded son had humbled him to the dust, for, after having brought him repeatedly, a degraded suppliant, to the feet of the upstart Gregory, (the power of the purse being in his hands solely,) he had sailed an out-cast to America.

But the climax of a mother's woes was yet to come. Tears and sighs are barren, useless proofs of that never-dying love and pity which a mother cherishes for even the unworthiest offspring; and tears and sighs were all that misplaced confidence had left this ill-fated lady the power to bestow on her ruined son, at a moment when, if a kingdom had been hers, it would have been deemed a paltry exchange for an only child's redemption from infamy and despair. That bitter moment had now arrived.

It was a dark December night—snow had been falling fast and heavy all the day. The man of avarice had left his counting-house, and

was sitting on one side of that paternal hearth, from which the prodigal son was banished; the grief-worn mother sat opposite him, unnoticed as a statue. He was, as usual, intensely occupied with papers of business and accounts, reckoning his multiplying riches; and she, left to her own thoughts, as much as if alone, was wrapt in melancholy meditation upon her son's uncertain fate, and his too probable exposure, as an outcast wanderer, to the inclemencies of such a night as the howling winds proclaimed,—contrasted, (oh how bitterly contrasted in her mind,) with the comforts and the luxuries of that fire-side, the mastership of that “paternal home,” which she had herself been instrumental in passing away from him for ever.

Each was thus occupied, when suddenly both were aroused and alarmed by the noise of a scuffle, and an altercation, proceeding from the entrance-hall; and presently there was a violent shutting-to of the street door, followed instantly by a loud and continued use of the knocker by some person forcibly thrust out of doors.

“What is the matter, James?—What is the matter, Hannah?”—said the alarmed mistress, already on the stairs, to the servants assembled in the hall.

Here Gregory (for he had followed her) coolly ordered them to keep the door shut.

"Come up stairs, my dear Mrs. Gregory, and I will explain," continued he. "It is that reprobate, your son, come back to torment us ; but he must on no account be admitted. It would be the most imprudent act imaginable to see him—you cannot, must not, shall not."

"O merciful God, what do I hear—is my unhappy son in England—is it my only child that in such a night as this is thrust out like a dog from the home he inherited ?"

"I must be plain, Madam. Prudence forbids temporising. I would not shock you with the news before, but I had a sort of half-drunk crazy letter from the lost creature this forenoon. In breach of all engagements he has left the ship he sailed in, and now some fresh wickedness pursues him. The fear of officers, he writes, would prevent him coming here till about this hour. I wrote him on peril of our curse to forbear his visit, and this I did, as you well know, entirely on your account, and not upon my own ; and I hoped he would not dare us to this trial. The bank itself, Madam, would not supply his follies, or pay the penalties of half his vices ; and when I last advanced so large a

sum of money to equip him out, I vowed, and I will keep my vow, that if he, in defiance of his oaths, returned, I never would hold communion with such a madman, except through iron bars."

The mother heard these words, and was for a moment stunned. A moment only, for there came another and a louder knocking, as if it were indeed the impulse of despair. She spake not, but nature lent her energies unfelt before. She darted down the stairs as swift as the hawk upon its prey; and ere Gregory could prevent her, threw open the door of his father's house to her still loved, though criminal son, who quickly closed it behind him again, in evident terror of pursuit.

Regardless of his distracted mother—blind to the menial witnesses of his degraded state—the poor, pale, emaciated wretch, wild with despair, and influenced solely by the impulse of self-preservation, saw none but Gregory, and addressing him in the most abject terms, implored his protection from the fangs of sheriff's officers who pursued him.

"I would not run away from a common charge of debt," continued the humble victim of his vices, "but the bill on which my name appears is, I am told, contaminated by fraud,

if not a forgery; and though innocent of such crimes, I have not nerve—though God knows my innocence—humbled and enfeebled as I am, I have not nerve sufficient to sustain the horrible effects of such a charge against me. Hear me, then, and save me, dear Sir. Only for this one night shelter me, and to-morrow convey me on board any vessel you please; and I swear that never, never, never shall the wretched Watkin Williams trouble you or his poor dear mother more.”

Gregory did not interrupt the suppliant, and the other auditors were mute. The wretched mother, eager as she was to clasp her still loved, though faulty and fallen son, to her maternal bosom, felt even that powerful impulse repressed by a still stronger impulse—horror at his danger, and the dreadful doom which she saw awaited him from the lips of her obdurate husband, on whom her straining eyes were fixed.

Hespake:—“It is painful to me—more painful than I can express, Mr. Williams, to be compelled to act with that firmness and that decision which your rashness in this visit, after my solemn warning, renders absolutely necessary. In a word, Sir, your quitting my house voluntarily,

without a moment's delay, will save me the trouble, and you the disgrace of a recourse to compulsive measures. Begone, Sir! Leave my house, or I must compel you."

Poor Williams shivered as with an ague fit—astonishment almost as much as fear now chilled the little blood left by debauchery in his veins. The menials held down their heads, ashamed of their master; but the electrified mother instantly exclaimed, wildly,

"Your house, cruel, cruel man—your house—Oh! merciful God, forgive the sinful act that made it yours! Yet no—no—no—my poor dear broken-hearted boy. However criminal, this is your own father's house, and what inhuman monster dare deny thee a refuge from despair beneath thy own paternal roof?"

As she spake she threw her arms round the neck of her son, and tears of bitterness and anguish flowed from the eyes of both.

At this moment a double knock at the door darted with the pain of an arrow's point to the heart of the trembling fugitive.

"They come, they are here," exclaimed the miserable son, tearing himself from the arms of his now literally distracted mother; and throwing himself on his knees to Gregory, said,

“ Husband of my mother, master of my father’s house—O save me from despair—mercy—protection—shelter for this night only,” implored he with uplifted hands.

“ Mr. Williams—Mr. Williams—you pain me to the heart—rise, Sir, and assume the attitude of a man. You ask of me impossibilities—the abandonment of the duty which I owe your poor afflicted mother, to protect her weakness—(you force me, Sir, to say it)—from the effects of your follies and vices. See already the state to which this rash attempt has reduced her. Support your mistress, Hannah, she is fainting. Mr. Williams, you must leave this house. James, open the door.”

The cold unfeeling monster was obeyed. The dreaded officers entered. The writ was served on the unresisting Williams, who, almost senseless, was conveyed away in custody.

The death stricken mother, who had shrieked and fallen at their appearance, was conveyed in a senseless state to her chamber, and the callous man of avarice returned to the calculation of his bills and bonds, cheered and comforted by a blazing fire, without one sigh for the misery he had witnessed, or one pang for the share which his own hypocrisy had in creating it! Such is the con-

science-deadening power of the love of gold !
Such are the heartless triumphs of avarice.

The blow which Gregory thus levelled at the maternal heart of her to whom he was indebted for whatever was or hereafter might be his, was her death stroke. She saw the doors of his father's house, that mansion of which he ought to have been the lord, rudely closed against the supplication of her own son for shelter, by the commands of him, whom she herself had elevated from the condition of a beggar, to the rank of husband and of master. Oh ! the agony of the heart of that mother at that dreadful moment ! Oh ! the biting irony of the cruel wretch who could thus trample on the miseries of a suppliant son in the presence of a doating and heart-broken mother, and coolly tell her that such barbarity was an act of prudence. The miserable woman felt at that moment the concentrated force of a thousand bitter reflections, which remorse had fixed from time to time upon her brain and in her heart, for what she now considered the criminal indiscretion of her second marriage.

Human nature could not be visited with shocks like these, and overcome their violence : the victim was destroyed. That night a delirious

fever commenced the hasty ravage of her already weakened frame, and in a few days its dissolution was completed.

Happily she was spared one dreadful pang; for by a horrible and singular coincidence, in that very same hour when his broken-hearted mother breathed her last sigh, the wretched Watkin Williams was painfully expiring in a prison, from the effects of poison,—which he had taken in a fit of madness resulting from despair.

CHAPTER XII.

A BACHELOR BANKER OF FORMER TIMES.

AND how felt Gregory at this double stroke of death?—As feels the sportsman when his game is stricken. Impulse the first is to secure the spoil—the next prepares him for another aim. And so, precisely, was the mind of Gregory occupied on this occasion. He shed no tears over the graves of those whose deaths relieved their wealth, already his, from every feather of incumbrance; nor did he even affect a wish “to call back to its mansion the departed breath” of son-in-law or wife. Still Gregory was aware that he must seem the mourner, and he accordingly put on the inky coat, the cus-

tomary suit of solemn black, and was, in every outward sign of woe, as deep a mourner as the most inconsolable widowers could have been.

He did more. For though the proceedings of coroners' inquests, at that period, were not circulated with the rapidity of the existing daily press, rumour always had its "many tongues," though not its types, steam-engines, and patent printing-presses, to spread reports of good or ill. Policy, therefore, pointed out to Gregory the necessity of expending a few more pounds (he felt they would be the last) in bestowing a decent coffin on the corpse of the lunatic suicide ; in hiring an additional hearse and pall, and burying the mother and the son in one vault.

This tribute of decency to the deceased, whose wealth the world knew that he possessed, the cunning survivor was convinced was necessary to repair some small rents in his reputation, which the denial of a refuge to his son-in-law had made visible to the eyes of close observers.

These funerals "performed" by Gregory, days, and weeks, and months were consumed as usual in hunting for more gold ; nay, he further deemed it policy, with a view to his next aim, to carry all the mockeries of woe to their most popular extent, and even risked the profitable

return of a large sum of money to erect a splendid monument, over a purchased piece of the dearest ground in London, in order that the female living saints, the widows or daughters of saints deceased, should, in their perambulatory meditations among the tombs of Bunhill Fields, say, "That's the family vault of Mr. Gregory. —What a handsome monument he has erected 'to the memory of his beloved wife!' who was the widow of the late Sir Watkin Williams, knight, and alderman of London."

The eleventh month of the widower's mourning, such as it was, and such as it appeared, had however nearly passed away, ere any fresh game had started, which he deemed worthy of his "ready aim."

In that interval he had devoted all the leisure that his unwearying pursuit of gain permitted him to snatch from counting-house and 'Change, in visiting such congregations and resorts of the saints, as were frequented by wealthy dowagers and spinsters, in the hope of beating up another fortune.

Emerging from the drudgeries of his dry-salting concerns, which, under his constant inspection, were then principally conducted by young Jenkins, the man of avarice himself

prowled further and further abroad in the world at large, seeking his prey among the indiscreet over-traders of the city, or in selecting dupes among the spendthrifts and gamblers from the west-end, who hunted the money-lenders at Garraway's and the speculating stock-jobbers in the Alley.

As successor to Sir Watkin Williams, the reputation of Gregory, as a ready-money man, was advancing daily; and many mock-pious attorneys, professionally entrusted with the *faux-pas*, peccadilloes, and pressing emergencies of serious people, were now in the habit of applying to the successor of Sir Watkin Williams, as a discreet man, with whom they could snugly share enormous premiums for assisting respectable persons, in urgent temporary distress, without risk of exposure to their clients, or hazard to themselves for a breach of the usury laws. And very useful, also, were the services of Gregory to those "pious" gentlemen of the profession, and grateful were they to him for his services, as a "conscientious" arbitrator, upon whose award they could always, not only safely rely, *but accurately antieipate*.

In vain, however, during these long eleven months and one more, had Gregory beat the

bushes for a new start in the matrimonial line, when suddenly sprung up to his view, quite unexpectedly, another widow, with another and a much larger fortune.

He had just finished his breakfast one morning, at his house on Clapham Common, he had cut the usual notch in the ham as a private mark, which would detect the theft of a hair's weight. He had locked the tea caddy, and was about to beckon the lad who held his horse in waiting at the gate, to carry him to the City, when, lo! a handsome coach, drawn by four horses, the coachman and two footmen in deep mourning, drove up the avenue. The bell pendant by the iron gate was rung, and a card was handed in to Mr. Gregory, having a black border round it, and bearing in the centre the name of "Mrs. Stanley Horton," who requested permission to see Mr. Gregory, if at leisure.

"The rich widow, Horton—the rich banker's widow! Now, then, James Gregory, at length the game's in view." This said Gregory to himself; and without replying to the servant, he hastened with uncovered head to the coach-door, and assisting Mrs. Stanley Horton, a lady of fifty-five, of grenadier height, but extremely thin, with a purple face and red nose, to alight, con-

ducted her to the room in which he had breakfasted, the only one in the house which had not been unfurnished at the death of Lady Williams, for the economical preservation of the furniture.

Who Mrs. Stanley Horton was, Gregory, the man of avarice, knew well; so also must the reader.

She was the relict of the second partner in the firm (but the principal in point of capital) of one of the oldest banking-houses in the city. The general business of Silverlock, Horton, and Co. was at one time not inferior to any in the city; but they had a peculiarly large portion of the confidence of merchants and other persons connected with that quarter of the globe formerly called "our American colonies," now the United States of America. Their connections included the principal Quakers, Methodists, and other sectarians, of the metropolis; and the forefathers of the heads of the firm, the ancient Silverlocks, were themselves originally Quakers; but their descendants were rather straight-laced followers of Whitfield.

The father of the then lately deceased Mr. Stanley Horton was a new graft on the firm. He was born a younger brother of a noble family; and having been sent out almost penny-

less to India, returned after only a few years absence with a large fortune, and a disposition to increase it. Accidental circumstances introducing him to the Silverlocks, though of high blood by birth, and high church by education, he fell in love with and married a niece of the childless old Oliver Silverlock, and (so it was arranged) his name, with the major part of his large fortune, and some good Indian connections, were added to the previous strength of the old sectarian banking-house.

At the death of his father, Stanley Horton (then just twenty-five) succeeded as sole and uncontrolled heir to all his property, his mother having died in his infancy, and he had no other acknowledged relation.

The æra of young Horton's entrance into the world as his own master, may be called (at least as far as city annals tell) the Reign of Bacchus, rather than the Reign of Fashion. Thus the young banker was pretty generally denominated the "City Ranger," having the reputation of a three bottle man—a "neck-or-nothing rope-ladder gallant," a "buck of the first order."

His name and his property were of very considerable value to the firm of a bank rather in decay from the loss of old friends and connections unrenewed; but the personal ser-

vices of Stanley Horton were correctly set down by his partners at *nil*.

By accident he might indeed be seen there now and then. His letters were generally addressed there under franks to the house; and when he was in town, his groom went for them regularly every day from the Temple, where young Horton, the man of pleasure, but no spendthrift, lived a snug bachelor's life, enjoying at a moderate expense the society of a jolly set of fellows, who, like himself, were devoted to their girl and their glass, free from the trouble, expense, and ceremonies of a regular domestic establishment. Besides the most comfortable chambers in the Temple, Horton had his hunting box near Dorking, in Surrey, and more cottages than one in other parts of England and Wales, where in summer time he saw a select few from the circle of his own set in town.

Thus merrily and gaily fled away nearly two score years of Stanley Horton's life; but then—there came a change. At sixty he began to think club dinners had lost something of their relish, and that somehow or other chamber suppers went off flat. He also missed too many of his "early friends;" a few had married, but more had died off. The new race rising in their places did not supply their loss. Reviews,

magazines, and newspapers had multiplied in number, and improved in worth ; so that young men had begun to read and to reason ; three-bottle boys were, of course, getting scarce ; and the salacious story, the bacchanalian glee, and the hunting chorus, were fast wearing out of use and memory.

When the sexagenarian buck came to town, London was to him but a huge churchyard, where the ghosts of his departed associates haunted him at every turn and corner.

In the country again this cottage brought to mind some mad freak or wanton folly, of which he felt ashamed, whilst another recalled the image of some departed, or some faithless fair. Still further to increase and aggravate his misery, it now also very often happened that in summer, when he sighed to be in the country, gout laid him by the heels in the Middle Temple ; and in winter, when he longed to change the ice and snow around him in the country for the blazing fires, brilliant lights, and crowded tables of a London coffee-house, gout pinned his solitary toes upon a stool in some chill and lonely cottage.

But why dilate ? It may be said, in short, that Stanley Horton at the usual period felt all the usual ills and miseries which inevitably visit the

old age of bachelors, in retribution for the self-indulgences and anti-hymeneal freedom of their younger days.

Just about the period when Stanley Horton reckoned sixty-three, it came to pass, that one of the Silverlocks was very suddenly summoned, by a messenger who never waits, or takes back a denial, to appear, with the closed ledger of his life, in order to have the debts and credits of his long accounts examined before the highest court above, and the banker accordingly departed.

Upon the arrival of this messenger to his partner, it was not surprising that Stanley Horton, aged sixty-three, should recollect that he himself would sometime be sent for, and who could say how soon? The thoughts which this subject engendered would, at no period of his life, have been very welcome to one who had never comprehended any distinction between the two words *serious* and *sad*, but, when old and gouty, were almost unbearable; for his mind being but slightly fortified either by religion or philosophy, his imagination was frequently exposed to the pranks of those aerial or infernal tormentors, who take such endless varieties of form, that no pen or pencil can describe them, but whose nature and office are figuratively expressed by the words 'blue devils.'

Now, daily, and almost hourly, would these imps of melancholy besiege the perturbed brains of the forlorn old bachelor, who felt himself almost alone in an over-peopled world. Of all his many merry friends—of all the “old familiar faces,” there were only two individuals remaining, who, at this crisis, retained the power to charm away, even for a time, his poor brain’s tormentors. One was a brother bachelor, by name Luke Stafford,—a stock-broker by profession, but more celebrated in his day and generation as a smatterer of mathematics and astronomy—an adept calculator in judicial astronomy—a fertile projector of new schemes for lotteries—a flaming politician—a stanch defender of John Wilkes and General Washington—and an inveterate declaimer against the tyranny of kings and the crimes of cabinets.

This spirit of vituperation endeared the politico-mathematico-astrologico stock-broker to the hypochondriac Stanley Horton—such an inexhaustible wholesale railer against things in general, was a balsam to the sore mind of a man discontented with himself, and soured at the retrospect of his own conduct ;—and to whom it was always a temporary relief to be told of the evil deeds or weak measures of others. Oh how these two old bachelors delighted one another

as indiscriminate, habitual censurers of all British ministers and British politics—actuated not by any feelings of real patriotism, or any spark of public spirit, but solely by a mutual disrelish of those quiet, social duties, and a mutual want of those domestic ties and affections which constitute the grace and happiness of a private station, and are the surest, if not the only sure, bases of public weal.

In addition to this, his chief recommendation as a suitable companion for his wealthy brother bachelor, Luke Stafford possessed another, not less agreeable. He was master of a secret in playing the game of backgammon, by which he was enabled, just at that critical moment, when he saw the diminutive blue dæmons approaching, in countless myriads, to besiege the pericranium of poor Stanley Horton, so to arrange the board, that, by a single move, the hypochondriac was made to win and laugh:—and laughter, every body knows, will, for the moment, put to flight blue devils.

The other exorcist, on whose still more potent aid the possessed old bachelor then relied, was a female—originally his menial servant, but in later times, as age and gout came on, exalted to the rank of housekeeper and companion.

How surprisingly potential was the influence

of Sukey Stone in dispersing from old Horton's brain blue devils, they only can imagine who have themselves experienced or have remarked the efficacy of a discreet, yet obliging, kind, and cheerful housekeeper, in alleviating the pains and penalties, and administering to the wants of such unfortunate single gentlemen, in the decline of life, as have been "rather wildish in their youthful days." Thus, when all the eloquent vituperation of Luke Stafford failed, and when even the exhilaration of three fits of laughter at the triumph of three successive hits at backgammon, could not completely scout the torturing imps from their fell purpose, then would the softer assiduities of kind Mrs. Stone, to a miracle, succeed:—for she possessed a charm that, for the moment, seldom failed, when aided by a glass of punch, "such as she knew how he liked it," "to drive dull care away" from Stanley Horton.

But at length comes man's last age of all—absolute decrepitude of body and imbecility of mind. It was in his seventy-first year that the old bachelor, contrary to all expectation, so far recovered from a paralytic stroke, as to have the sound exercise of his mind, such as it was, and the use of all his limbs, save his left leg, which, with part of his left side, was incurably para-

lyzed. This attack brought forward a claimant, as heir-at-law, in the person of a noble pauper, a cousin, some fourteen or fifteen degrees removed, whose solicitude, during the crisis of doubt, was the means of discovering that there existed, at that period, no will, although both Mr. Luke Stafford and "kind Mrs. Sukey Stone," had, "over and over again," been assured by old Horton, that, in case of "any thing happening to him," he had taken very good care of them.

It had long been his intention, in fact, to bequeath a large legacy to each ; but making a will is at least a serious affair, and, as we have already observed, the hypochondriac mind of Stanley Horton could never be serious without being sad : so that whenever for a moment he let in a thought of his last will and testament, death and blue devils, at the same time, rushed in together ; and then, instead of calling for pen, ink, and paper, it was instantly, " my kind Mrs. Stone, I feel very queer, do make me a tumbler of punch, such as you know how I like it ;" and by the time the said tumbler was empty, and blue devils were gone, he felt perfectly satisfied, in his own mind, there was not the least danger " of any thing happening to

him just yet;" and had he died when the doctors gave him over, he would have died without leaving a will.

The confession of the recovered paralytic confirmed the fact of "no will;" and the surprise of Luke Stafford and Sukey Stone at this discovery was scarcely greater to the expectants, than was that of the old bachelor at the starting up of a claimant for all he should leave behind him; and he resolved immediately to set about the work of "giving and bequeathing."

Poor Horton! the task, to him, was not an easy or a pleasant one. He was nothing of a miser; it was not, therefore, the sense of separation from his riches, in particular, that gave him pain; on the contrary, he would willingly have given away all beyond a competence for the prolongation of his life. Truth is—he could not bring his mind to endure, for any length of time, a single thought that carried him beyond the present state of his existence, and therefore had scarcely ever suffered even the crudest idea concerning not only the posthumous distribution of his property, but any thing posthumous whatsoever, to engross his attention for a moment. Now, however, such ideas were forced upon him. The fact that some heir-at-law, of whom

he had never heard, would have possessed all he left behind him, opened new views to the childless Horton, and, in some degree, compelled him to self-examination.

He began his ruminations, first of all, by doubting whether, in strict equity, he ought not to consider the claims of relationship, however distantly removed, if absolutely ascertained, to be paramount. Next came the recollection of conversations with old Silverlock, who had often suggested the propriety, though not so compelled, of his making such provisions, that in case of his death, the large amount of his property might not, all at once, be drawn from the banking concern—a circumstance which would endanger the credit of the house, and probably even involve it in ruin.

“ But, then,” he would ask himself, “ what was the ruin of Silverlock, Stanley, and Co. to him ? Two nephews of old Oliver Silverlock, and a fag, who had been formerly a clerk, constituted, with himself, the then existing firm, and they were all nothing to him ; had he not a right to do what he pleased with his own ? ”

This question, to which his recent reprieve from death had now seriously, at least more seriously than ever before, brought his mind, very much posed and perplexed poor Horton.

Who was to call him to account for his decision? Nobody in this world, certainly; but, what if there be accounts to settle in the next! Well, what then? If we do what we conscientiously think for the best, we do right. True; but, then, again, he asked, what, in my case, is best? He had ten thousand a-year to give away; and if he was hereafter to be responsible for the distribution he made of so much wealth—what a thought!”

This idea, conceived in the then debilitated state of his reasoning faculties, never remarkably acute, not all the clamour against government, echoed by Luke Stafford, nor all “the tumblers of kind Mrs. Stone’s best punch, made exactly as he liked it,” could totally eradicate from the troubled mind of Horton.

The doubts and waverings which now tormented him were clearly perceived and understood by both the legacy-hunters, who watched his couch, and who were still the only companions of the old bachelor, both uniting to keep away all others from the old man’s society, though each felt jealous of the other’s separate influence.

Luke Stafford, neither expecting nor coveting the fortune himself, at one time indulged the

hope that he had achieved a glorious thing for the cause of liberty all over the world, when, by taking advantage of an opportune fit of Horton's political spleen, he had nearly persuaded him "to give and bequeath" the bulk of his property, in trust, for General Washington. Such a bequest, if it could be legally and safely secured, he pronounced, would erect for the donor a statue of immortality in the New World ; and this project, romantic as it seems, was actually cherished by old Horton for some time, until, unluckily for Washington and the New World, thoughts of another world obtruded ; and Horton began to doubt whether it would be quite right to assist a rebellion of the colonies against their King, however they might be justified in their resistance to unconstitutional acts of his weak and wicked ministers.

About the very time that these doubts held him from his infirm purpose, the newspapers were full of praises of a magnificent bequest that had been left by a rich and penitent nobleman, recently deceased, to that excellent institution, the Magdalen, as a sacrifice of atonement for some acts of unprincipled libertinism, committed in his youth.

And now the suddenly-eplightened Stanley

Horton all at once was penetrated with the boundless good of such a charity. He attended regularly on Sundays at the chapel, melted into tears at the songs of penitence, enrolled himself a governor, and had several private interviews with the reverend secretary, as to the securest method of devising all his property to such a heavenly asylum.

The influence of Luke Stafford from that time was evidently on the wane. Politics and backgammon had lost much of their charms; and as the bodily infirmities of the old bachelor increased, his mind sunk rapidly into that species of even infantile imbecility, so well described as second childhood.

Then worn out manhood, no longer able to walk alone, is led about as in its infancy, by any finger chance holds out to it—is delighted or is terrified as the rattle or the rod appears, and smiles or cries itself to the sleep of death as circumstances may happen to award it, a kind nurse to rock its easy cradle, or a cruel one to consign it screaming to a hard, and dark, and solitary pillow.

Now Mrs. Stone, plainly perceiving the near approach of this second childhood in Stanley Horton, and ascertaining that no will

was made, or likely to be made, grew daily more and more anxious as to what was to become of her in that oft-supposed case of "any thing happening to poor Mr. Horton." She watched the proper moment—she saw it—and she seized it.

In one of those fits of nervous terrors, when the lonely old bachelor, having lived through a long life upon the selfish maxim of "I care for nobody, no, not I, for nobody cares for me," now, at the close of it, felt that he had not a fellow creature, save only kind Mrs. Stone, to watch his dying pillow,—that clever woman all at once feigned such pangs of conscience, that she could not, as she told him, live another day without unburthening her troubled mind to her beloved friend and master. She was now so thoroughly convinced of her past guilt, that she could no longer, no, not another week, consent to live a life of open sin ; that indeed, after the beautiful sermons she had heard at the Magdalen, she dared not remain under his roof in the equivocal character she had so long for love of him sustained.

Old Horton stared, trembled, wept.

And then she wished with all her heart that she was rich, for even yet it was in their power to make some reparation for their past bad example. "How happy is the dying

man," continued Sukey Stone, "who, having a lawful partner in a tender, faithful, confidential wife," (here she sobbed, on purpose to repeat the words tender and faithful wife,) "wants no prying friend or cunning lawyer at his pillow to prompt or to receive his last instructions about the distribution of the property he must leave,—instructions that are as often accidentally or wilfully frustrated as they are fulfilled. But a fond wife, a tender and faithful wife, ought to know her beloved husband's will as well as he does himself, and, living or dead, to make his will her own will. Then when the sad time does come that he is taken from her, she, his dear wife, has no occasion for lawyers, stamps, and parchments. All legacy duties are thus saved, and delays and mistakes of all sorts are avoided; for a conscientious widow can immediately execute her beloved husband's will according to memorandums confidentially entrusted to her, or as his own dear lips, or even a dying look, may point out to her watchful eyes."

There was truth as well as artifice in this argument, which even the weak and wavering mind of the old bachelor could not but perceive; and when, on the other hand, he weighed the

threats with which the sobbing orator concluded, "that such was now the awakened state of her conscience, that though it would break her heart, she knew it would, she was resolved immediately to retire into solitude, and hide her wretched head from him and all the world for ever, unless—unless—unless—she was blessed with the hand and the name, as she knew she had the heart, of him who was and ever would be her dear, dear friend and master."

The issue was not long uncertain.—Sukey Stone had now become the vital spark of his existence—to lose her was to die.

Thus Stanley Horton's name was added to the long list of dotards who, by marrying in old age the menial they were in their youth ashamed to own even as a mistress, illustrate more forcibly a proverb never believed till too late—"young men think old men are fools, but old men know young men are fools." Poor Horton's ridiculous marriage was apparently the folly of an old man ; but he knew that the follies which led to that marriage were those of a young one.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN EXECUTRIX WHOLE AND SOLE.

ALL the world was, of course, astonished at the rich old banker's marriage; it was the pabulum of a month's town-talk, and the Grub-street of that day was in a bustle with its low and dirty devils turning to account some hundred variations of the marvellous event. But the buz died gradually away, for the prudent Mrs. Horton went so discreetly on in the same quiet track as she had pursued when Sukey Stone, that neither at the banking-house or elsewhere was the least difference perceptible; whilst to the dotard himself she was in all respects the

same kind Mrs. Stone as ever. She was the same tender nurse, the same cheerful companion; she remitted not a particle of her wonted care in well-airing shirts and nightcaps with her own dear hands; and if possible, took greater pains than she did before in making for her beloved husband his tumbler of punch, "just as she knew how he liked it."

The only material apparent difference between the housekeeper that had been, and the wife that was, related to the greater care (some called it the stricter custody) she took of the dear old man's person. She did not think it proper for his nerves that he should talk too much, and therefore even poor Luke Stafford, as well as every other acquaintance, was compelled to be satisfied with learning, upon knocking at the door, that "Master was much the same, but too poorly to talk to any body but mistress."

The heir-at-law had never attempted to call, but his letters of kind inquiry shared the fate of all others; they were opened and answered by Mrs. Horton herself, to save her dear Mr. Horton the trouble.

The concerns of the banking-house Mr. Horton had never in his life attended to in detail; but Luke Stafford, as stockbroker to the firm,

used to report progress occasionally ; and Mr. Robinson, the confidential solicitor of Mr. Horton, had possession of the deeds of partnership, and all other deeds, papers, &c. &c. at his own office.

Now and then it was necessary to admit this latter gentleman to an audience with his client, but it always took place in the presence of Mrs. Horton, to whom, in fact, every individual, and every concern, with whom or in which he had ever had an interest, was unreservedly referred. The acting partners paid their respectful court to the apparent arbiter of their future fate ; but such was her discretion, she never drew a draft on her own account, nor ever exceeded the amount of her current expenses by one pound above what they were when she was Sukey Stone, the housekeeper.

Thus discreetly, modestly, and faithfully did Mrs. Horton conduct herself during the three-and-twenty months and seven days that she was the wife of Stanley Horton ; during the whole of which period she never suffered him to be a minute out of her sight, and then the hand of death removed him from his wealth and his wife for ever.

Then it was that Sukey Stone, free from all

those restraints which cunning and its inseparable associate, fear, had for many years imposed on the housekeeper and the wife, blazed forth before the world as the wealthy widow Horton, in all the uncontrolled display of her own natural character.

A pompous funeral for her poor dear Horton was her first glory. A coach and four horses were for the present jobbed; and one of the first drives which she had taken, was that which brought her to the gates of Mr. Gregory, who, as we some pages back described, went forth to meet her. She swam like a black swan into the room, where she now sat fanning herself on one side of the window, decked out in all the gloomy gauderies of wealthy widowhood, and on the other sat the anxious and avaricious Gregory, impatiently watching the motions of her lips for the announcement of the object of her visit. The widow did not suffer him to remain long in suspense. She carried herself, however, as stately as the habits of her former life permitted her. Her natural understanding was strong and clear, and though totally destitute of female accomplishments, save such as are acquired in the kitchen and the still-room, she was an expert arithmetician, wrote a good plain

hand, and could read the newspapers, with the omission of the names of foreigners and foreign places. One other quality she possessed in perfection, a dauntless assurance, which, with a strong voice and stout lungs, placed her on a par with the boldest men of that day in loudness and freedom of speech ; and would almost have qualified her for a woman of high fashion in the present times.

“ You are surprised, I see, Mr. Gregory,” she said, “ at this unexpected visit. Well, I can offer you no better apology for this liberty than that I want your advice and assistance. I know you’re monstrous clever. Poor dear Horton thought you a particular religious sort of person ; but as I don’t pretend to set myself up as one of the over-righteous folks, now poor Horton’s gone, you’ll get no cant from me ; however, that’s neither here nor there. You knew my dear Horton very well. He had a good opinion of you as a man of business. I’ve heard Luke Stafford—you know Luke I dare say ; he’s our broker, you know—I’ve heard Luke and my poor old man talk over your history often ; and, according to their prophecy, you are to be a monstrous great man indeed ! However, that’s neither here nor there. I be-

lieve you knew poor dear Horton, as good-hearted sort of man, Mr. Gregory, as ever lived. A jolly fellow, too, I assure you, in his young days; but latterly, a good deal hipped: indeed, he was getting full of meagrimms, and ten to one would have turned methodist, and built chapels with all his fortune, if it had not been for me. But I forget—you're a little, or rather a good deal twisted that way, Mr. Gregory; but I shall speak my mind—I can afford it, you know, and why shouldn't I. You're a man of sense, Mr. Gregory, and won't like a woman the worse for not being a hypocrite, if she can afford to do as she likes. But, however, that's neither here nor there. To come to the point.—I suppose you know my husband left me whole and sole. Yes, Sir! every thing in the world that poor dear Horton had, is now mine."

Gregory's heart swelled within him, even to pain; and he with difficulty repressed a deep sigh at the recollection of so much wealth embodied in the fair form before him: but he drew in his breath, through fear of interrupting her.

She continued—"Yes—all—all mine, Sir! The words of the will are, 'All my property, real and personal, wheresoever and what-

soever.' It's a strong will, Sir ! I took pretty good care of that : it was my right as his lawful wife, you know, Mr. Gregory. Poor dear Horton—he's gone for ever !—went off like a lamb, Mr. Gregory—and here am I, left whole and sole, as they call it, to do as I like. Well then, Mr. Gregory, to come to the point—as I said before—you know it's three weeks yesterday since I lost my poor Horton. I'm sure I've not been in a hurry : but I'm not going to be humbugged as he was, poor indolent old soul ! and leave my property to other people's fingering. I told the three partners my mind very fairly on the same day that poor Horton's death made me in part mistress of the concern ; for their capital would not keep open their doors a week. I gave them due warning that I should look into everything with my own eyes, as I have always done, for I never leave anything to servants. Well, I gave them a week to make up their accounts. You know, Mr. Gregory, it depends upon my will and pleasure whether we go on banking, or wind up accounts, and shut up the shop. So I told them. They stared like stuck pigs, and talked a pack of nonsense about ladies not being acquainted with business. That's all gammon,

says I, Mr. Silverlock: women have eyes in their heads as well as men, and I intend to make use of my own in preference to your's. Poor Silverlock and his two partners stared more than before; but at last I frightened them to death with an oath; for I swore by G— I was in real, right earnest, and that in one week after the funeral, I should expect to see such a statement of all the concerns of the house, as that I, with the tolerable stock of common sense God has given me, might be able to understand how matters are going on, and decide on some plan for the future. Now, Sir, would you believe it, that up to this moment these people are either such fools that they cannot, or such knaves, that they will not, produce me such an account as I can at all comprehend? and yet, though I say it myself, I am not quite a fool."

Here the lady paused, and fanned her rather too animated face. Hitherto the intense anxiety of Gregory had glued his tongue to the roof of his mouth. This pause for breath on the part of widow Horton seemed to make it necessary that he should speak in his turn; and he commenced with a compliment and a smile.

"Fool, Madam! No, indeed, Madam—I

fancy friend Silverlock and his partners have discovered, ere this, that your visit to the banking-house was no fool's errand."

"Ha—ha—ha!—well that's not amiss; why, who would have expected a joke from Mr. Gregory?"

"Why not, my good Madam?—I am neither bishop, priest, or deacon."

"But the world sets you down for a saint; that's more sanctified still, you know."

"The world can't set me down for a fool any more than the Silverlocks can the lady, their principal partner, and as for what else the world says, neither you nor I need care, Mrs. Horton, so long as we have our own approbation, and keep that in our own hands, Mrs. Horton, which, if it can't at all times buy the world's applause, will always, at least, enable us to laugh at its censures."

"How sensibly you talk, Sir. You quite agreeably surprise me. I expected to find you quite a different kettle of fish. But to return to these precious partners of mine, you cannot imagine what pains they have taken to drive me from my resolution and tire my patience; but they'll find they've 'got the wrong sow by the ear,' Friend Gregory. They talked all manner

of stuff and nonsense about assets and mortgages—and suits in chancery—and cross bills filed—about good debts, and doubtful, and bad debts—accounts overdrawn—and advances to Scotch banks, I suppose to bother me. Then again, they shrug up their shoulders, and lift up their eyes, at God knows how many thousands locked up, as they call it, in American securities. You are aware that poor Horton was, at one time, America-mad. In short, Sir, the fact is, these Silverlocks managed their late partner easily, and they thought to manage me more easily still. But they reckoned without their host. I'm a woman to be sure—so was good Queen Bess—and she ruled greater men and wiser men than clerks in a banking-house. No, no—no dust in the eyes of Sukey Horton. Had my husband left me mistress only of a cook-shop, I should have looked after things myself, and I'm sure a money shop requires a master's eye at least as much, and they shall find I will be master now." Here again the widow paused, and fanned herself.

"Nothing can be more reasonable, Madam, than that you should possess a full knowledge of your own affairs, and have a voice as to the controul and disposal of your own property.

Ladies, in general, certainly rather shrink from than seek an interference in money affairs and business transactions; but where nature has bestowed such an unusual strength of understanding, as in your case; where a mind so superior to most females—”

“ Oh, come now, no blarney, if you please, Mr. Gregory. I have, thank God, a tolerable understanding, and that makes me flattery-proof. Not being brought up a lady, I had, of course, no boarding-school education—plain English is the only language I understand—and plain figures, in plain black and white, are the only arguments that will do for me. So, no flourish, if you please, Sir, but give me your patience for two minutes longer, and the object of my visit will shew you that I put some confidence in your ability, and as for your integrity, I am convinced that it is your interest to be honest.—But will you excuse me, Mr. Gregory, you have breakfasted, I see. That ham looks a very fine one. I have been up, you must know, since six o'clock—breakfasted at seven, and the airing I have had has made me ready for a second. I'll take a cup of tea with a little brandy in it. You see I am a plain dealer, Mr. Gregory.”

The required refreshment was quickly dispatched, to the no small surprise of Gregory, who saw half a pound of ham, two French rolls, a gill of brandy, and half a pint of tea, tossed off with the relish and glee of a hungry hunter.

"Now then, Mr. Gregory," resumed Widow Horton, "I will come to the point. After what I have said, it will not much surprise you to be told that yesterday afternoon there was a famous blow-up at the banking-house between me and my partners, and that we are at this moment at daggers drawn. Tom Silverlock chose to give himself airs as head of the firm, as he calls himself; but I told him, 'Only let me draw my property out, and what an empty head it would be!' Ha! ha! ha! that wasn't bad, was it? I'll take another mouthful of your ham—it's excellent, and so is your brandy. Half a cup of tea more—not quite so much sugar—a little more brandy. Well, Sir, one word brought on another, and the younger brother interfered, as well as the poor old devil of a fag, who, to this day, was their clerk. He had the audacity, in a polite way, to repeat the old hint, that petticoats did not suit well with a counting-house stool, and that household affairs were fitter studies for ladies than the accounts of a banking-house. I

did so far conquer myself, as to keep my fingers from the old fellow's nose, though I frightened him by swearing that I felt inclined to box his ears. Indeed, they then went so far as to throw out distant hints of Chancery references—talked of my poor Horton's heir-at-law—were not sure that he would not at least attempt to set aside the will. But I snapped my fingers at the fools, put them at defiance, and they began to draw in their horns."

The loud tone of these last words, and the *colour de kitchen-fire*, that now suffused the widow's face, Gregory, in part, attributed to the strength of his own brandy, and was, therefore, not a little alarmed at a third appliance of her fair fingers to the neck of the bottle, whilst she observed that the mere recollection of such insolence almost overpowered her.

"They then wished I would let them talk the matter over with some person of my own choosing, to whom they could point out the injury I was doing to myself by, what they called, my headstrong measures. They then mentioned a number of people I never heard of. At length they named you, and I instantly recollected what my poor, dear Horton often said of you. Hatred of law and love of peace

made me at length listen to their proposal, to refer our dispute to so respectable an arbitrator as you. You must excuse me, Mr. Gregory, for again expressing my surprise in finding you altogether so different a person from the grim puritan, I confess, I half feared to encounter—though not much of a coward either. I can scarcely bring myself to believe that you are really the Mr. Gregory to whom the Silverlocks agree to refer all matters in dispute between themselves and me. Never having seen the Mr. Gregory, so celebrated for his sanctity, wisdom, and proverbial integrity, and only guessing at his appearance from the tales told of him by my dear Horton, Luke Stafford, and others, and especially from the high opinion of the strait-laced Presbyterian Silverlocks, I expected, I own, to see à demure, long-visaged widower, old-looking, though not old; in short, a canting, stern, sour, morose methodist, in whose sight a plain-dealing, free-speaking woman, like me, would find neither grace nor favour. Can, then, the open-countenanced, youthful, gallant, and gentlemanly Mr. Gregory, that I now see, be the Mr. Gregory who married the pious Lady Williams, and has acquired so much reputation in the religious

world. And if so, may I hope that a saucy widow's rights and interests will not suffer, by being left to his arbitration, and that he does not think worse of her cause because she has the courage to defend it, in a manner, more boldly, perhaps, than many of her sex could, or, if they could—would do."

This was, indeed, "coming to the point." Gregory's heart danced for joy at the prospect thus opened to his view; but his answer was most artfully framed, so as to imply rather a gracious acquiescence in what was proposed, than the eagerness he really felt to embrace it.

"It was such a delicate task. He had such a multiplicity of engagements; and if in doing his duty his conscience should compel him, in some points, to differ in opinion—"

"Oh! stuff, nonsense! Facts and figures will speak for themselves," said the widow.

"To be sure, to be sure," said he.

Another quarter of an hour's conversation so ingratiated the cunning Scot in the favour of Mrs. Horton, that his old skin-and-bone roadster was ordered back to the stable; and at her pressing invitation he accompanied the rich "whole and sole" to town in her coach-and-four, in order that, during the drive, they might

“talk over” certain plans and proceedings, to be immediately adopted, for the purpose of bringing the Silverlocks to a speedy reckoning, or, as she expressed it, “to book.”

END OF VOL. I.

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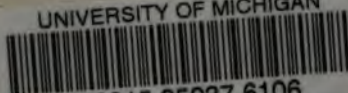
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